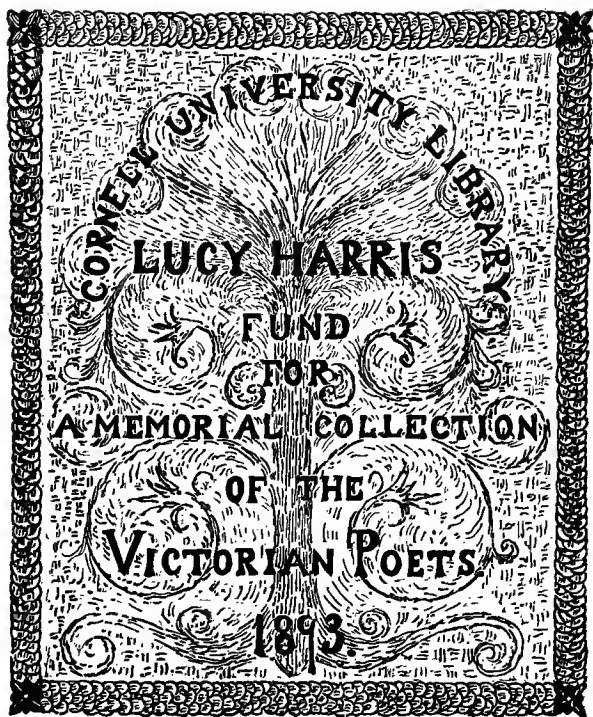
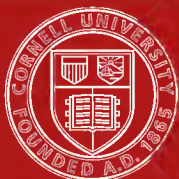


TALES AND LEGENDS
IN VERSE



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Tales and legends in verse,



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TALES AND LEGENDS IN VERSE

TALES AND LEGENDS IN VERSE

BY

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE CHAIN OF GOLD	I
TYRRELL'S CONFESSION	9
THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS	16
THE LEGEND OF WILTON LEA	32
THE HERO'S WELL	41
THE FELON'S RACE	53
THE LAST OF THE FAIRIES	59
THE LEGEND OF HAWKSTONE CASTLE	65
THE LIFEBOAT	80
THE PRISON OF THE DANE	89
THE OLD MAN'S TALE	117
PHILIP LEE	142

SHORT PIECES.

HOPE	151
MARCH, 1862	152
CANA OF GALILEE	154
THE LAND OF GOD'S DELIGHT	155
THE ANSWER TO "THE LAND OF LITTLE PEOPLE"	157

TALES AND LEGENDS IN VERSE.



THE CHAIN OF GOLD.

THE snow lay heavy on heath and bush, and the path
was hard to find,
Fierce and bitter the sleet and hail on the gusts of
the frozen wind ;
Dim and grey through the drifting haze the light was
failing fast,
And the wail as of a dying year was borne upon the
blast.
Sick at heart, with surging thoughts and doubts far
worse than pain,
The young man slowly fought his way across the
broken plain,
Until the storm that howled around had beaten the
storm of the mind,
And in the very struggle for life his doubts were cast
behind.

Slow, slow, with stumbling foot, o'er hillock, hollow,
and stone,
With the death-chill driving through the breath and
piercing to the bone,
Through the drifting storm with labouring heart and
faint and blinded eye,
Till there almost seemed no end at last but to lie
down and die,
Until the will that had borne him up half yielded to
despair,
And the lips that long had lost their God gasped
feebly in a prayer,
He struggled on. Hope came again. The battle
was renewed :
Step by step he fought his way, defied, but unsub-
dued ;
And it seemed an answer to the prayer—the slacken-
ing of the gale ;
And its howling dropped to a murmur, and lighter fell
the hail.

But deep the drifts, and far the end, and he was
weary of fight ;
And o'er the drear expanse there fell the shadows of
the night :
When close beside his path he saw a motion in the
snow,
And he heard the sound as of a sob, fluttering, feeble,
and low.

It came from beneath the shroud on the earth ; and
something—he knew not what—
Bore down the hard stern self in his heart, and turned
him to the spot.
And there, beneath the frozen wreath, he found them
side by side,
A little, scarcely living child, a mother who had died.
Her mantle wrapped around the babe, she laid it on
her breast,
And, giving all to save her all, she passed away to
rest.

Again was heard the pleading cry, the little hand was
raised,
And feelings all unknown before came o'er him as he
gazed,
And he seemed to have gained a heart of flesh instead
of a heart of stone,
As he took the child from the breast of the dead, and
laid it in his own,
And closed it from the cold, and sought to soothe its
moaning pain,
And, in the new-born strength of love, tried the dark
path again.

The end was far and the drifts were deep, but the
storm had passed away ;
And, softly sleeping, at his heart the little orphan lay ;
And through the lifted clouds one star sent down its
tiny ray.

Onward he went, and, as he went, there shone before
his eye,
Outbursting from the failing cloud, the glories of the
sky ;
And firmly, slowly, lightened by the precious load he
bore,
O'er hillock, hollow, and stone he passed, and gained
the welcome door.
But, as he passed the village church, the window's
painted glow
Lay like a picture in his path upon the gleaming
snow :
Weary, but victor, stained with blood, in colours fair
to see,
The Shepherd and the rescued lamb ; the motto,
" Follow Me."

A few short days, the little life just flickered for a
while.
She learnt to look for his return, to brighten at his
smile ;
And as he kissed the withered cheek or smoothed the
clustered hair,
Would turn to nestle in his arm, and find a refuge
there ;
And wreathed her love around his heart, until the
fairy chain
So strong had grown, no power of life might wrest its
folds in twain.

It was the holy Christmas Eve. He watched her as
she lay,
Till the flush on the cheek and the fevered start in
sleep had passed away.
The lingering hours wore slowly on, the fire was
burning low,
And the dim shadows on the wall were wavering to
and fro.
Perchance he slept. Before his soul a vision seemed
to rise—
No brighter, truer sight was e'er vouchsafed to mortal
eyes.
The bells had pealed the midnight chime, 'twas
Christmas in the land,
When he was aware of an angel fair who touched him
with her hand.
He rose obedient to the touch, and followed where
she led.
The flowers of heaven burst from earth beneath the
angel's tread.
She pointed where the glorious stars were scattered
far and wide,
And, like a mist before the wind, she vanished from
his side.
And as he gazed upon the sky those glories brighter
grew—
O'er the deep tones of the winter night there spread a
golden hue ;

The heavens were filled with angel forms that, bending
o'er the earth,
Poured the full notes of that sweet song that hailed
the Saviour's birth.
And one, in likeness of a child,—he knew that face
again,
All radiant now, released at last from weakness and
from pain,—
Flew down and touched his hands and lips with
kisses soft and light,
And softly whispering, "Follow me!" she passed,
and it was night.

Then with a start he woke. The hand he held within
his fold
Returned no pressure to his grasp. 'Twas lifeless all,
and cold.
A light. So gently o'er the heart had passed the hand
of death,
It seemed as though an angel's lips had kissed away
her breath.

The old man lay on the bed of pain, and the years
that had gone by—
The years that once had been his friends, came round
to see him die.
Blotted and blurred their outlines, sad were the tales
they told ;

But they all seemed linked together, as it were with
a chain of gold.
And the chain went back in the distance till it came
to the long ago,
When the young man bent o'er the little child lost in
the wreath of snow ;
And since that night, as following years brought back
the Christmas-tide,
Each Christmas morn had brought again that angel
to his side,
Had sung for him the song of love, the kiss of love
had given,
And added a link to the chain of gold that bound his
soul to heaven.
The blessed vision aye returned with bright and
brighter glow,
And in his inmost heart he knew the bidding sweet
and low,
And saw the Shepherd and the lamb upon the gleam-
ing snow.

Now, old and worn, with feeble heart, he laid him
down to die ;
The shadows wavered on the wall before his flinching
eye ;
The bells had chimed the midnight hour, 'twas
Christmas in the land,
When he was aware of an angel fair who touched him
with her hand.

He rose obedient to the touch, and followed where
 she led,
The flowers of heaven burst from earth beneath the
 angel's tread.
And as he waited for the end, outburst the blessed
 song,
And he saw the haloed light that spread around the
 heavenly throng ;
He saw the spirit of the child descending like a dove ;
He felt the arms encircling round, he felt the kiss of
 love ;
He heard the blessed "Welcome home !" and hand
 in hand they went
Up to the heaven of heavens, beyond the starry
 firmament.
The worn and weary frame was dead ; but ere the
 heart grew cold,
Within the treasure-house of God blazed the bright
 chain of gold.

TYRRELL'S CONFESSION

(ORIGINALLY INSERTED IN "TEMPLE BAR MAGAZINE," 1869.)

On the morrow after Lammas Day in the last year of the eleventh century, William, the king, was slain by an arrow from his own men in the New Forest, and was carried to Winchester and buried there. Such in effect is the tale of the old Saxon chronicle. No bell, we are told, was rung for him ; no mass sung for the repose of his soul ; but he was buried like a wild beast, unwept and unhonoured. To make that forest his father had wasted fields, and driven into misery and death the tillers of the soil, for over a space of thirty miles in length. There his brother Richard had years before met with a sudden and mysterious death. There William himself had enforced all the cruelties of the forest laws, and men had had their eyes scorched out, or lost their lives, for sacrilegiously interfering with the game which the king delighted to honour ; and there, near a ruined church, he fell, smitten, as it was thought, by the wrath of God through the hand of man. Many were the tales of warnings sent of the coming fate. Dreams and messages were in vain, and if the king believed them at all, he hid his belief under a bold face.

On that 2nd of August he was at his hunting-lodge at Brockenhurst. Amongst his companions was Sir Walter Tyrrell, or "the Archer," Lord of Poix in Ponthieu and of a small barony

in Essex. As the company sat over their meal, words spoken at first in jest culminated in bitterness, until the boasting threats of the king rankled in the heart of his follower. Then were brought in before William six shafts for the crossbow, and he, choosing two, handed them to Tyrrell to be used in the chase, bidding him do justice with them. "I will do so," was the significant reply, and soon afterwards the whole party mounted and proceeded into the forest. It is said that the rest of the hunters went in other directions, and that William and Tyrrell rode alone. Then, as the autumn sun was setting, the bleeding body of the king was found pierced by one of the shafts, and was carried on a labourer's cart to Winchester.

Tyrrell was seen no more in England. He escaped to France, and common tradition has pointed him out as the slayer of his lord. Some chronicles state that the death was caused by an accident from the glancing of the arrow from a tree. Tyrrell himself is reported to have stated that he was not near William when he fell, but whether this report is true or not, the facts remain that he was believed to have done the deed, that he fled away, and that he never returned to England or attempted to recover the profits from his English lands. It is, of course, possible that some other hand may have been guilty, and that the outcry against Tyrrell was raised in order to conceal the real culprit. On the other hand, it is equally possible and more probable that the charge was based not only on his own conduct, but also on knowledge of the quarrel which had taken place on the very day of the murder. Neither fearing God nor regarding man, the coarse brutality of the king must often have deeply offended those who were drawn around him by motives of self-interest, and it is easy to imagine how the fierce Frenchman may have brooded over the last of many insults, and determined to avenge all in one fatal blow. And so, in the forest consecrated to bloodshed, the tyrant's soul passed away. The murderer might for a time deny the accusation or attempt to explain it away; but when the spirit that nerved the hand had itself grown feeble, and the time drew near that he must die,

anxious to obtain the last ministrations of the Church, he would, in the depth of self-abasement, confess the truth, and acknowledge the weight with which the crime had for all those years been pressing upon him.

FATHER, I cannot pass away,
 I linger as I lie ;
 For the wrath of God keeps life within.
 Oh, shrive me, and let me go free from my sin !
 Bless me, and let me die.

Father, it's thirty years ago,
 A weary chain of years,
 When the worn heart seeks in vain for grace,
 And the great God turns away His face,
 And there's no relief in tears.

Fearful the past ; the present—hell ;
 The future all unknown.
 I did not even dare to die :
 And we have lived, the curse and I,
 Together and alone.

If it had been but in the fight,
 When hand's opposed to hand,
 Had I but sought him as a foe,
 Met thrust with thrust, and blow with blow,
 And slain him with my brand,

I had not deemed his death a sin,
Nor mourned a single day ;
But, oh ! it is a fearful crime
To wait for an unguarded time,
And then take life away.

He was my king and feudal lord,
He gave me lands in fee ;
And God and the holy saints, they heard
When I swore to be true in deed and word,
As I bent before his knee.

I swore to be true in deed and word,
And surely I meant it then ;
But it's hard to keep, though easy to say,
And time was long, and I went astray,
Even as other men.

Perchance it was but a jeering word—
A look—some trivial slight,—
I cannot tell ; I never knew
When it began, or how it grew—
A dark and fearful blight,

The deadly curse of thwarted pride,
The blight of a hating soul ;
And ever it led me on and on,
Till pity and Christian love were gone,
And murder was the goal.

But I held my thought within my breast,
 And I could fawn and smile ;
 And still I took the gifts he gave—
 Took them, and felt myself a slave—
 And cursed him all the while.

All thoughts were gone, save the constant thought
 Of only how and when ;
 And as time went on, I laid my plan—
 I had been more or less than man
 If I had wavered then.

We were together in the wood,
 Hunting the fallow deer ;
 He rode before me like a king,
 I, as a slave, was following,
 And there was no one near.

And a mist rose up before my eyes,
 A tumult in my brain ;
 And, swifter than a startled deer,
 The pulses rushed in mad career
 Through every swollen vein.

I could not hear the wind in the trees,
 I could not see the light,
 For the blood that boiled like flames in hell,
 For the sound of death, like a 'larum bell,
 Rung on a wintry night.

A moment—and again the heart
 Beat in its own control ;
And the brain knew nought but the living will,
The steadfast deep resolve to kill,
 The hatred of the soul.

I held my breath and kept it still ;
 My sight was clear as day ;
My pulse was quiet as the dead.
I drew an arrow to the head,
 And launched it forth to slay.

I marked each second of its flight ;
 I saw it pierce his side :
'Twas but a grapple at the rein,
A plunging fall, a writhe of pain.
 And so the Red King died.

I do not know how others feel
 Who do as I have done ;
Who fear, yet plan the deed of strife,
Then find the object of a life
 In one short murder won :

I felt no change, yet change there was—
 I could not hate the dead ;
I rode to where the body lay—
That silent, bleeding mass of clay
 Woke neither grief nor dread.

I only felt I must away,
To hide the murderer's head.

Away ! and in the rush of flight,
I banished, for a time,
All that I felt and all I saw,
The vision of a broken law,
The memory of crime.

'Twas only for a little while—
A little, oh ! so brief ;
For then the dreadful guilt of blood
Swept down my soul as winter's flood
Tosses a riven leaf.

And ever, and still, for thirty years
That day has been to me
The brand of a curse upon my brow,
And made me all that I am now,
And all I fear to be.

The penance even of a life
Hides not a single day ;
Oh, shrive me from the weight within,
The guilt of unforgiven sin,
And let me pass away !

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

On the 27th of September, 1066, after a long and weary waiting on the northern coast of France, William the Norman sailed from St. Valery with a mighty host, to win for himself the sovereignty of England.

For nine months of little ease Harold Godwinson had reigned over Saxons, Danes, and Cambrians, and throughout that period, on both sides of the Channel, great had been the preparations for the struggle raised by the claim of William to the crown. Harold held the throne as one who had been the right hand of the Confessor, who had received the recommendation and nomination of Edward on his death-bed, and who had been chosen as Lord and Father by the assembled chiefs and by the voice of the people. William's claim was based on the facts that Edward's mother had been a Norman princess, that Edward had some years before his death held out to William a hope of succession, and that Harold had been induced, under pressure of detention in Normandy, to swear to become the man of the Norman Duke and to marry one of his daughters, and that he now declined to give up the English lordship, and alleged that he was already married. Neither of these facts would in themselves give William any title to the throne of England, but they served his purpose, gave a colour to his enterprise, and enabled him to hold up his opponent as a perjurer, to be branded with the anathema of the Church.

What the fate of the struggle would have been, if Harold had not been summoned to the north to meet the invasion of Harold Hardrada and Tostig, none can say ; but just before the time when, in answer, as it was thought, to a special appeal to Heaven and to St. Valery, the south wind blew softly, Harold was forced to proceed with an army to York and to fight at Stamford Bridge against the hosts of the Norsemen, leaving the southern coast of his kingdom undefended.

It was on the 25th of September that Hardrada and his men were smitten down, and the storm of Orre was poured fruitlessly on the English force in defence of the Landwaster. The great mass of the Norse army was destroyed ; but many were they who fell on the side of the Saxon monarch, whose arms might, if they had lived, have turned the tide of battle on the low hill of Senlac.

Two days later the south wind blew across the English Channel, and the great fleet of the Normans through the night followed the blazing lantern of the Conqueror towards our coast. On the next day they landed unopposed at Pevensey and took up a strong position at Hastings, from whence they ravaged the surrounding country.

It seems that the news of this invasion was carried to King Harold at York within four days after the disembarkation, and that on the 5th of October he returned to London to take immediate action against William. We may perhaps treat as poetical exaggeration the story that before he left York he was told how the fields glittered with the shining arms of the Normans, how the homes of his people were destroyed by fire, the inhabitants slain with the sword, and the little children left to weep over their slaughtered parents ; but there can be no doubt that by the time he reached the banks of the Thames the tale of the miseries inflicted on the South Saxons by the Norman troops must have been borne to him in all its fulness.

As he marched southward to London, men from all the surrounding counties flocked to the king's standard, and for a week after his arrival he waited there, partly to give time for the men

of Wessex to join him, and partly to enable his jealous brothers-in-law, the two northern earls, Morcar and Edwin, to prove that their patriotism was greater than their lust for power. They never came, and it was upon those forces which he could collect from only a portion of his kingdom that the Saxon king was forced to rely in the great day of battle.

During the period of waiting, messages passed between the two opposed leaders. The day and place of battle was fixed, and Harold went to Waltham Abbey, and there, with offerings and prayers, prostrated himself before the holy crucifix; and there, as we are told, while he prayed the image howed forward on the nails which held it to the cross, and, as conscious of the coming fate, looked mournfully down on the doomed monarch.

On Thursday, the 12th of October, the journey towards Senlac was begun. It is not a matter of much consequence whether preparations had been previously made for the erection of the long, low rampart of palisading which was destined to protect the front of the English force, or whether the whole of the army followed the king from London. Great general as Harold undoubtedly was, and well acquainted with the post which he meant to defend, we may be sure that every precaution was taken which skill and experience could suggest, and that nothing was left to be collected at the last moment. By the morning of Saturday, October the 14th, if not by the preceding evening, all preparations were completed, and Harold and his men had fortified their camp in a manner which showed how thoroughly he understood the relative powers of the forces.

At the present day we can wander over the grounds where the ruins of Battle Abbey remain. From the terrace which tops the relics of one of the old buildings, we can look down on the low grounds of the valley to the south. The face of the eastern end of the Saxon position shows an abrupt elevation from the field, and towards the west the ground slopes down gradually to reach the level of the land in front of it. In front of the western end is the outlying knoll near which so many fell on both sides, and behind the line to the north was the ravine with its steep sides

and marshy bottom, to which the overthrow and death of so many Norman knights gave the name of the Malfosse. Towards the east we can look down into the hollow where the site of the High Altar was discovered, and we can listen to the guide who tells us how the body of Harold was found beneath a clump of gorse near by. The adaptation of the ground for the building of the Abbey, and the alterations and accumulations of eight hundred years, must have considerably altered and in some places raised the surface of the earth. I think it probable that, except at the extreme east, the incline from the south was more gentle than it now appears; but even with this allowance the elevation gradually decreasing towards the west must have given very great strength to the position which the Saxons fortified against the Norman enemy.

A low, strong palisading was planted along the south front, extending almost to the little streamlet which bounded the extreme west. The ascent of the hill, aided by such a defence, must have effectually checked any attack of cavalry on the Saxon line, and have enabled the defenders to rain their darts and axe-strokes at an immense advantage upon all who ventured to test the strength of their position. It was the power of the Norman knights (not to be separated for any length of time from their horses) that was most to be feared; and so long as those horses were kept to the south of the palisade, so long was it impossible for the English army to be worsted in the battle. Behind the line of Harold's chosen troops stood the two standards—one, the Golden Dragon of Wessex, the glorious banner of the West Saxons; the other, Harold's own ensign, the Fighting Man, wondrous to see, enriched as it was with gilded work and costly stones. The western portion of the Saxon line appears to have been the weakest, but it was protected by men posted on the outlying knoll, who had seen warfare against the Welsh, and who found their natural enemies in the Gaels from over sea. Advancing up the valley with the Bretons and the soldiers from Maine on his left, the Normans in the centre, and the men of Picardy and the French mercenaries on his right, William came within fighting distance

of the Saxon post. About nine o'clock in the morning the fight began. At first the archers and the foot soldiers attacked the front. The arrows were met by the wall of shields ; the darts and javelins hurled from below were answered with more fatal effect by those cast from above ; while those who were able to come within striking distance of the ponderous two-handed axes fell cloven in two by the weight of the blow. Many were slain on both sides ; but the advantage was at first with the soldiers of England. Meanwhile, on the left, the Bretons and their companions were met by the defenders of the knoll and the western end of the Saxon line, and were hurled back in confusion. Then it was that an error was made. Harold had expressly ordered that no man should quit his post in the battle ; but when the English soldiers saw their foes flying from before them, human nature could not stand the temptation. After them they went ; the foreigner was to be slaughtered, and the axes, clubs, swords, and spears had a rich meal of blood. For a time the flight of the Bretons spread a panic through the Norman host ; and it was only by superhuman exertions on the part of William and his bravest leaders that at last the flight was checked and order re-established. Then those who had fled turned on their pursuers, surrounded them, and cut most of them to pieces. Again the attack was made, and again it was met. Fiercely and furiously men fought. Gurth and Leofwine, the two brothers of the king, appear, from the Bayeux Tapestry, to have been surrounded and killed, and one of them is believed to have been stricken down by the heavy mace of William of Normandy. During that period of the strife, twice was William himself thrown to the ground, his horse slain under him. On all sides blood was flowing, and axes and swords ringing, while the shouts of the combatants were heard far away from the field of battle. Still Harold the King held his own. Still the twin standards floated in the air ; and, if the palisading was broken, there was still behind it the impenetrable shield wall and the stout hearts of the bravest soldiers in Britain.

For nearly six hours the fight had lasted. Could Harold keep

his enemy at bay until the setting of the autumn sun he might strengthen himself for the next day, and William's position would be more than dangerous if fresh levies could be brought to bear on his already weakened power. There was no time to be lost ; the victory must be won, if at all, on that day. He passed the word for a feigned attack to be made on the western end of the Saxon line. He accurately estimated the temperament of the men and leaders there posted. By a simulated flight on the part of the foreigners the Saxons were drawn from their entrenchments, and then the returning power of the Norman army surrounded and overwhelmed them, and at last found a footing round the end of the fortification. The Norman horses were seen on the north side of the palisades.

There was now no great natural obstacle in the path of their attack. The slope, probably somewhat rugged and broken, ran up to the banner-stones of Harold, and up this slope the Norman knights charged, while the whole front of the English was engaged with the attack of the main army. But the slope was narrow, and the bristling masses of English warriors had no thought of flight in surrender. Their shields, thick with hostile arrows, still formed a wall, while strong hands hurled back darts or thrust spears through their enemies, and, from above that wall, the tremendous whirl of the long axe clove the helm and broke the sword and strewed the field with horses and riders. Even when, after fearful loss on the part of the Normans, the wall was broken, and the defenders reduced to groups of desperate men, these last sold their lives dearly, and great was the carnage on both sides. Gradually and slowly fighting onward step by step, with their numbers still perishing in front, still increasing from behind, William and his chivalry worked their way towards the standards. There still stood Harold fighting like a monarch for his kingdom, like a hero for his nation. We are told that at this point in the battle William ordered his archers to shoot into the air and so strike the helmets of the Saxons ; and it has been generally supposed that in obedience to this order their arrows were shot high up, so that in falling they might penetrate the

leathern head-covering worn by many of the Saxon soldiers. I may be wrong, but I have never been able to believe this. An arrow shot nearly straight up into the air will fall no one knows where, and a slight current of wind will make a missile so sent as dangerous to the friends as to the enemies of the archer. I think that the real order given to them was simply to aim higher—to shoot, not at the shields, but at the heads of the Saxons. If we are to judge from the Bayeux Tapestry, the arrow which struck Harold came, not from above, but on a line with his face, when his head was slightly thrown backward in the act of striking. The arrows bristling on his shield have come straight towards him ; one has passed over the shield, and has struck his right eye. Grasping desperately at the shaft in the instinctive effort to withdraw it, the king falls mortally wounded beneath the standard. A small body of Norman knights—most of whom fell in the attempt, stricken down by the companions of Harold—made a desperate rush to the spot. Four of them reached it, and, with sword and spear, stabbed out the remaining life of the great Saxon. The Fighting Man was beaten down ; the Golden Dragon uprooted from its banner-stone, carried away in triumph to the Conqueror, and the last of the hero band that stood to defend it smitten to death. Afterwards breath was found in a few of those chosen warriors, and they were carried away and lived ; but at the moment when the fight was over around the standard, not one was supposed to have survived.

The victory was won ; but in the shades of the evening the light-armed Saxons, who, seeing that all was lost, began to flee, finding themselves pursued turned on their pursuers and slew many of them, as, in ignorance of the ground, they fell horse over man down the steep sides of the Malfosse, until the hollow was full of writhing forms.

William won the battle and the crown. He may at first have intended to rule justly ; but he either could not or did not protect his new subjects from the tyranny and oppression of his followers. A warlike and independent nation will not willingly yield its freedom, and the spirit of the Saxons was not likely to submit

without murmur to all the indignities which the Norman conquerors showered down upon them. For years afterwards we hear of risings to be quelled, of rebels to be punished. Even where there was apparent obedience, there must have been inward hatred, and many must have been the conclaves of the discontented, who, despising their own subservience, eagerly sought for some means to avenge themselves on their oppressors. From these meetings the Saxon gleeman would not be absent. He would remind his hearers of the glories of their fathers, and stir up the lagging spirit of the faint-hearted, and at times he would teach them how valiantly the great king strove to defend his kingdom, and would point to the prophecy of the dying Confessor, that a day would come when the green tree cut away from the midst of its trunk should be joined thereto again, and again put forth leaves and bear fruit in its season, and that then the woes of England should end. It is to such a song, told to such a meeting, that I have endeavoured to give words.

NORMAN castles towering round us
Crush the confiscated land,
All the nation moans in anguish
Underneath the Norman hand.
Shall we kiss that hand with meekness,
Bow the knee in humble mood,
In our ears the cries of slaughter,
In our eyes the mist of blood?

Hear your wives and daughters crying
For the help ye dare not give ;
See your sons and brothers dying,
And can ye endure to live ?

'Twas not thus we met the tyrant
Upon Senlac's fatal plain,
When the life-blood of our heroes
Soaked the earth as autumn's rain ;
Still the faithful earth in mourning
Shows to heaven the crimson stain.

Gather round my harp in silence ;
List the record of that day,
Till ye hear the crash of armour
And the shouting in the fray ;
Till the dead in living spirit
Bid ye battle while ye may.

Tall and stately looked our monarch,
Harnessed as beseemed a king :
In his hand the axe of battle,
On his helm the golden ring ;
O'er him waved the ancient Dragon,
O'er him blazed the Fighting Man,—
As he stood to face his warriors,
In the forefront of the van.

“ Every footstep of the Norman
Reeks with blood that he has shed ;
In his ears the curse is ringing
Of the dying and the dead.
Raise to heaven our ancient war-cry,
Steep your axes deep in gore ;

Strike in freedom's name, and, striking,
Let the smitten rise no more.
Not for glory or for power
Are ye gathered to the fight ;
Not for Harold, but for England,
Strike ; and God defend the right !”

Then there rose the voice of thousands,
Like the roaring of the sea,
Shouts of “ God and king for ever !”
Shouts of “ Death or liberty !”
Ceased the tumult, and in silence
Every head was bowed in prayer,
Trusting honour, life, and country
Humbly to the Maker's care.

Who shall say the trust is broken,
Though the Norman gained the field,
And the life-blood of the pleader
Clotted o'er his riven shield ?
Still in memory lives their honour,
Still in death their souls are free,
Still may leaf and bloom and berry
Cluster on the stately tree.
Raise again the cry of battle,
Once again the standard rear,
And in victory and vengeance
Learn the ending of the prayer.

On they came, the Norman masses,
Gathered in the vale beneath ;
On, in thousands upon thousands,
In the panoply of death,
Like a mighty cloud of tempest
Rolling o'er a blasted heath.
And a shout of proud defiance
Burst in thunder from our van,
And the sunlight flashed in splendour
All around the Fighting Man.

Then, in answer to the thunder
From the tempest cloud below,
Came the lightning rush of arrows
From the archers of the foe ;
And amid the shout of battle,
Like a vast and rolling flood,
Dashed the leaders of the Normans
Where the Saxon heroes stood.

Well they stood in line unyielding,
Dart for dart and stroke for stroke ;
Sweep of axes, thrust of lances,
On the clanging armour broke ;
Sweep of axes, thrust of lances,
Ring of sword on helm and shield,
Call of bugles, shouts and curses,
Madly through the battle pealed.

Foot to foot, no step was yielded,
Nought between them save the dead,
Riven shields, and anguish writhing
In the blood itself had shed.
Red with gore the lifted axes,
Red with gore the spear and sword ;
Blood above them, blood around them,
Blood beneath them on the sward.

As the thresher's flail in harvest,
Fell the axe of Harold then ;
Under Leofwine, Gurth, and Godric
Were the groans of dying men.
And we grasped our axes tighter,
And we shouted in our might,
As we saw the foremost waver,
As we bore them back in fight.

Proudly, proudly blazed the Dragon,
As the war-cry rose again
That so oft before had called him
To the banquet of the slain,
When the Raven fell before him,
Plumage torn and broken wings,
When the English kites and foxes
Battened on the flesh of kings.

Loud and louder rose the clangour,
Fast and faster fell the blow ;

Horse and man went down together
As we charged upon the foe,
As we drove them, fighting, flying,
Backwards o'er the bloody sod :
There was death and desolation
Where the English Dragon trod.

But the surges beat upon us,
As the waves of ocean roar,
In the flood time of the winter,
Dashed upon a rocky shore.

All unceasing in its power,
Still that ocean marches on ;
Every wave is stayed and broken—
Broken ; but its work is done.
Victors still, in lessening numbers,
Hour on hour we stood at bay ;
Every wave that broke upon us
Bore some Saxon lives away.

So we fought, and still the sunbeams,
Slanting from the western sky,
Saw the gold upon our banner,
Heard untamed our battle-cry.
But we knew our numbers broken,
As we drew in closer ring
Round the standard of our honour,
By our hero and our King.

On they came, the Norman horsemen,
Charging up the sloping hill,
Where the shield wall stood to battle,
Where the Dragon floated still.
Swifter poured the deadly arrows,
Like the burst of summer hail,
Piercing through the weakened harness,
Battered helm, and broken mail.

On they came, the wall was riven,—
Scattered, desperate of life,
Worn with toil, the Saxon warriors
Bore them still against the strife.
Earth was cumbered with the dying,
Where in closing fight they stood,
Dealing death in death, and falling
'Midst the stream of Norman blood.

Overnumbered by the horsemen,
Churl and chieftain, side by side,
Pierced by spear-thrust, hacked with broadsword,
Prince and peasant fought and died.

Still beneath the blazing Dragon
Harold's axe was whirled around,
And the stricken lay before him,
Like a rampart on the ground ;
And the boldest of the Normans
Quailed before that kingly form,

Standing, as a rock of granite,
In the centre of the storm.

He hath fallen, arrow-smitten ;
Still he strives to rise in vain.
Dogs, that dared not face him living,
Stab him, dying, on the plain ;
And as droops a soaring eagle,
Stricken in its pride of flight,
Fluttering fell the golden Dragon,
'Midst the shadows of the night.

Long and weary is the darkness—
Shall we never see the morn ?
Has our glory sunk for ever
In the bitterness of scorn ?

Cold the hearts that once were valiant,
Weak the arms that once were strong ;
Saxons crouch before their masters,
As a dog beneath the thong.

None to raise the wounded Dragon,
None to staunch the wasting drain ;
Branded with the name of coward,
Tamely can ye bear the stain ?

No ; I see the dawn is springing,
Bright and brighter grows the ray.

In your hearts the call is ringing,—
Heed the message while ye may.

Think of all that ye have suffered ;
Raise again the battle brand ;
Let the life-blood of the Norman
Purge the honour of our land.

THE LEGEND OF WILTON LEA.

THERE is a height above the shore,
And on the height a ruined mound ;
The crumbling stones half lichen'd o'er,
Half buried in the ground.
Time and the sea-wind hath defaced
The long-hewn stones, where still is traced
The chevroned work, the patient skill
Of living hearts, of living will.
The broad cliff standeth steep and white,
But just beneath its topmost height
Are two dark caves, like sightless eyes
Aye turned towards the morning skies ;
Or like the orbits of a skull,
All impressionless and dull,
Still suggesting grief and care
In the life that has been there—
Sorrow burdening the birth,
Life that would not leave the earth,
Weary nights and toilsome days
Crushing out the voice of praise,

Till the heavy work was done,
And one goal at least was won.
All is o'er, the soul hath flown,
Nothing is left but the silent bone
Tablet of a parted groan.

There is a narrow dangerous way
Up the tall cliff's white face ; and they
Who have explored those caverns say
There did the sea-bird build her nest,
There did she rear her young ;
And 'midst the down from off her breast,
And lime, and rough and broken stones,
Were vestiges of human bones,
To which, e'en in their last decay,
The rust of iron clung.

Unfold the past, roll back the years ;
Wake from the dust the withered brain,
Once more to live in hopes and fears ;
Clothe the dry bones with flesh again.

Bid arch and buttress, tower and hall,
Stand as they did in days of old ;
Fling out the banner from the wall ;
Let warriors gleam in steel and gold.

They answer not. Nor human breath,
Nor human eye can pierce the gloom ;

No hand can break the seal of death,
Or roll the door-stone from the tomb.

So let them sleep, and in their stead
Let Fancy here awhile be crowned,
And weave a legend of the dead,
A legend of the ruined mound.

Stern and strong the Norman keep
Looked from the height o'er the rolling deep—
Looked from the height o'er the fruitful land,
Reft by the sword from the Saxon's hand.
All that the searching eye could reach,
Forest and meadow and rocky beach,
From the distant hill to the wave of the sea,
Was claimed by the Baron of Wilton Lea.

Fierce in battle and silent in hall,
Stern and cold as his castle wall,
Parting with little and grasping all,
Never a work of mercy done,
Never a word of blessing won,
The baron lived, in heart, alone.

Against the blue of the evening sky the purple clouds
were rolled ;
'Midst the dark stems of the forest trees flashed the
long rays of gold.

The lengthening shadows lay in peace on the head
of the yellow corn ;
The lark sent down her voice from the sky, and the
finch from the leaf-clad thorn ;
The sound of slowly homing kine came from the
distant lea,
And tints that fell from the changing clouds made
glory o'er the sea.
All nature smiled in loveliness as to the castle mound
The baron returned from his chase on the moor with
man and hawk and hound.
The day had been long and the quarry strong ; o'er
hill and dale they sped,
Until at length the death-shout rang on the top of the
Beacon Head ;
But the heat of the chase had passed away, and weary
their steps and slow,
And the baron's face was worn and stern, and heavy
was his brow.
It may have been that on his soul some darker
memory weighed ;
It may have been that on his head some deeper curse
was laid :
None knew, or cared to ask. Before his band he rode
alone.
His deeds, perchance, were guessed by all,—his
thoughts were all his own.
And there, before the castle gate, a weary peasant
stood.

There were blood-marks on his hands and feet, and
on his face was blood.

He stood before the baron's path, and raised his hand
on high,

And the stain on the palm bore the deep dark hue of
blood that hath long been dry.

"Thine are the fruits in the barns," he said, "and the
beasts on the lea and the moor.

From all that God hath sent to thee deal kindly with
the poor.

I have come from far away, and have not where to
lay my head ;

I ask but a place wherein to rest, and the gift of a
morsel of bread."

The baron gazed on the hand upraised, and the
haggard, blood-stained face,

He had smitten the speaker to the ground but for
God's saving grace.

And cold and stern the answer came, "Get shelter
where ye will ;

Feed on the berries from the bush, find water in the rill."

"Now, nay, great chief," the stranger said, "but hear
me when I pray ;

No blessings light upon the roof when the poor is
driven away."

The wrath, half checked before, blazed forth. "Have,
then, thy prayer," he said ;

"Thy food the garbage of the soil, the dungeon stone
thy bed."

A word, a sign ; the Norman train around the sup-
pliant close.
They hale him through the castle gates with jeers and
scathing blows,
They drag him where the caverned cell lies deep in
the white cliff's side,
Where two small chinks let in the light that comes
o'er the eastern tide—
Two feeble glimmering rays of light ; a rank and loath-
some den,
Foul with the moanings of despair and the deaths of
starving men.
And there they cast the fainting form, and, at their
lord's command,
Around the victim's waist they clenched the ponderous
iron band
Chained to a beam. For food they gave a crust all
fouled with gore,
And bade him drink of the drops that fell from the
roof on the putrid floor.

The baron returned to the banquet hall. The wine
was bright and red,
But still he saw in the wassail-cup the blood that he
had shed.
Below the board the menials sate, and the song was
loud and high,
But still through the shouts the baron heard the moans
of agony.

He turned to his couch. No peace was his ; the
victims he had slain
Gathered around his restless sleep, and showed their
wounds again ;
And the cry of woes his hand had wrought rang
through the fevered brain.
Out driven in his dream at last, he wandered in a wood
Where corpses mingled with the trees and water
changed to blood.
And still the cry of doom rang forth, behind him and
around,
And, as he ran, dead hands stretched forth and clutched
him to the ground.
In vain, with piteous gaze, he sought to find some
saving goal ;
No voice in heaven or earth to plead for mercy on his
soul.
At last, at last, through the midnight drear, one feeble
ray of light,
And a low soft call that seemed to break the horrors
of the night.
In desperate hope he struggled on, yet still behind
him came
The shade of death, the sea of blood, the vengeance,
and the flame.
O'er broken ground, through tearing thorn, still must
he press the race,
And die, if he may win in death a hallowed resting-
place.

And the voice grew sweet, and the beacon bright ; but
when the strife was o'er,
A broken man the baron fell beside the opened
door.

And One came forth and raised him up, and bare him
in His hand,
And spake in words of peace, and there was silence
in the land ;
And ministered with gentle touch, all fainting as he
lay,
And cooled and healed his wounded limbs, and
washed the stains away.
But then, as sense and thought returned, before the
baron's eye
Uprose the hand with the stain on the palm of blood
that hath long been dry.
The baron gazed on the hand upraised, he gazed on
the blood-stained face,
And a cry burst forth from his inmost soul as he knelt
at the feet of Grace,
And once again he heard that voice which he had
scorned before,
“ Behold, thy sins are all forgiven ; depart and sin no
more.”
He woke, and started from his bed. The dawn was
in its birth,
And the soft sounds of coming day went upward from
the earth.

With hasty foot and trembling frame he trod the
winding stair,
He turned the prison door, but lo ! no prisoner was
there.
Useless the chain hung from the beam, empty the
iron band,
And fair the cave in the morning light as blessed by
an angel's hand ;
And carved upon the hallowed wall, in gentle beauty
smiled
A symbol of redeeming love—the Mother and the
Child.

No more as Baron of the Lea—within that sacred
cell
For many a year the hermit prayed, as ancient legends
tell.
The iron ring of massive weight that once his Saviour
bore,
Chained to the beam, around his waist in penitence
he wore ;
His wealth, his lands to holy hands and charity
resigned.
God grant that he hath found His grace, and that we
too may find.

THE HERO'S WELL.

HIGH on the rock where Gibeon stands alone,
The sentinel of Zion, Judas sate.
Far to the west, in azure and in gold,
The ocean rose to meet the setting sun.
But nearer than the sea there lay the shore ;
And nearer than the shore there stood the hills ;
And 'midst the hills, like snakes, the valleys crept,
E'en from the margin of the distant plain
Up to the very bastions of God ;
And 'midst them all there lay the Syrian host
In might and numbers, like a leprous curse
Blighting the hope and promise of the land.

It well may be that, in the books of heaven,
The wailing of an infant in its pain
Is marked and chronicled by angels' hands ;
But the full anguish of a nation's wrong
Finds itself wings, and, bursting from the earth,
Stamps its own record on the living page.

From Galilee the cry of blood arose—
The blood of man, of woman, and of child ;
The blood of those who bowed them to the stroke,
And only called on Heaven ; blood without stint ;—
Until the earth, sealing her patient breast,
Held the dark stain up to the frowning sky.

It seemed as though no eye beheld the slain,
And the death-cry that gasped its way to heaven
Found e'en the home of God untenanted,
And earth and sky were desolate. How hard
To learn that vengeance cometh from the Lord ;
To wait, and, as it seems, to wait in vain ;
To bear in hope ; to linger on in hope ;
To die unsatisfied, nor hear afar
The rushing murmur of His chariot-wheels !
“ Hath He indeed forgotten to be true,
And cast us off for ever ? Can it be
That we have loved and trusted Him for nought ?
Will He not come ? How long, O Lord, how long ? ”

At last uprose the chieftain of the hills,
Judas the Maccabee, and, strong in faith,
Strong in the memory of his victories,
Girt on the sword won in the flush of war,
Upraised his standard for a rallying point,
And stood between the living and the dead.

But unto him came a bare thousand men,
While two and twenty thousand hostile swords
Chafed in their scabbards, and the plunging hoofs
Of twice a thousand horses tore the ground,
For want of corpses to be trampled on.

But Judas and his men were on the hills,
And came to Gibeon. Then, because he knew
That many hearts were troubled with affright,
And doubts were in their councils, for a space
The chief withdrew him from the gloomy camp,
And climbed the mountain, seeking on its height
Companionship with Heaven and his thoughts.

And there he sate until the sun went down,
Discerning many memories in his heart,
But seeing all the future like a night.
He knew the power of his enemies ;
He knew the weakness of his followers.
Retreat or battle : and if battle, death ;
And if retreat, dishonour. Every thought
Fell overburdened with a double weight ;
And the old spirit that in by-gone days
Had borne him past obstruction, till his foes
Fled from before his name, was his no more.

And there he sate until the vanquished sun,
Fighting the darkness even in its death,
Buried its rays beneath the western sea.

'Then, as its power faded from the earth,
And sea and sky joined in the requiem,
Judas arose, one hand upon his spear,
The other on the rock, and looked around,
And saw and trusted to the love of God.
And a great peace came o'er him, and he knelt,
Bowing his head down even to the dust,
And worshipped, and returned unto the camp.

He called his followers ; and they came around,
Lingering and sad. He marked the downcast eye,
The lip indented, and the sinewy hand
Firm clenched against itself, as if in hate
Of the weak soul that kept it from the fight.
They came around. The torches in the night
Cast not more fitful change of light and shade
O'er helmet, shield, and spear, o'er face and limb,
Than in their hearts the momentary flash
Of bravery, not firm enough to dare,
Rose up and died away again, and left
The gloom of fear that struggled to be brave.

And so they stood in silence as he spake :
"The enemies are many ; we are few.
But when did the Almighty first begin
To take account or number of His foes ?
When did He send an ambassage of peace,
Or render tribute to His conquerors ?
Have we not heard how, in the days of old,

When Israel was weak and trodden down,
The Lord arose, and, with an arm of might,
With hailstones cast from heaven, with angels' hands,
With the broad flashes of His thunderstorm,
The kings and captains of the earth were slain,
And Jacob dwelt in safety? And whene'er
His cause was trusted to the swords of men,
Those swords were swayed by more than human might,
And single warriors told of thousands slain.
Who raised up Samson, Gideon, and Saul?
Who gave the Philistine to David's sling,
And blessed us with an everlasting name?
Is the Lord's eye less keen, weaker His arm,
Than in those days of great deliverance?"
He paused, and as he paused he looked around;
Yet answer came there none, except a sigh
And a slow shaking of the downcast head,
And then at last a low and murmured sound,
"Let us return. To fight is but to die."

He swept his hand a moment o'er his face,
As blotting out remembrance of the past.
And when he spake, his voice was low and clear,
But hollow as the dropping of a knell.

"Ye may be right. But I am God's alone.
I dare not hesitate, and unto death
Must remain constant where the heart is bound.
I will not bid you follow; but I go.

And if I go unaided, 'tis from Him ;
And if I die alone, I do but die
A sacrifice of peace. Grant me but this :
Redeem my body. Lay it in the tomb
Wherein my fathers sleep, and say of me
I could not live with Israel in chains ;
And bless me in my memory. Fare ye well."

He laid his own on Eleazar's hand,
The nearest and the bravest of his friends,
Pressed it, and uttered once again, " Farewell."
And, looking with an eye that seemed to look
Out of the world into eternity,
Eye into eye and through it, blessed them all,
And would have turned. But ere the words were
sped,

A murmur, like the rushing of a wind,
And then a long-drawn sob, and then a cry,
Burst from the little band in unison :
"We all are thine. Do with us as thou wilt."
And spears and swords flashed upwards, and the men
Close gathered round with short and broken words,
And earnest eyes filled with unwonted tears.
And Eleazar, bending o'er the hand
Still resting on his own, in trembling voice
Spake in the name of all: "Thy God is ours ;
Where thou art we are. Even unto death
We are but one. Forgive us." And the cry
Ran through the band, "Father, forgive thy sons !"

A moment—and a cloud o'erdimmed the eye,
The dark plume quivered, and the labouring breath
Rose like the surges of a troubled sea,
As, head and face thrown upward to the sky,
And lips drawn firm, he stemmed the tide of heart
Rising within him. Then he spake again.

“I was but now like to the child that lay
Within the chamber of the Shunamite,
And your then love was as the prophet's staff
That gave no life. Now, hand is joined to hand,
And heart to heart, and living love to life.
Ye have done well, and memory is with God ;
And the proud history of faithfulness
Shall blazon in the annals of the land ;
That every name shall be in coming times
A cloud of fire to lead God's champions on.
Farewell until to-morrow. Rest and pray.”

The ring of shield and spear within the camp
Awoke the dawn, and ere the sun arose
The little army gathered in array.
No doubts were there ; but earnest, living zeal,
Girding the soul to battle, till it longed
To prove itself the birthright of the Lord.

Then the low sounds that mounted to the sky
Taught the young light the hallowed words of prayer—
“Father and Chief, the day is in Thine hands ;

Our lives are Thine—Thine only. Take or spare,
Even as seemeth best. For, taking them,
Thine own are only taken to Thyself ;
But spare them, if Thou wilt, for the dear sake
Of those we fight for. Yet Thy will be done.”
Then, as the words uprose, the march began,
And Judas passed before them on the way.

Onward they went until the vale was gained
Where lay the Syrian army, all outspread,
Like a huge dragon, cumbering the ground.
A narrow pass was at the valley's head ;
On either side the dark and barren rocks
Stood scowling at the chasm, as in hate
That they, despite themselves, were thrust aside
To make a pathway for the will of God.

They entered in, and, with extended front,
Filling the passage even to the hills,
Halted in expectation of the foe ;
But scarce their sheen had glittered down the vale,
When in the hostile camp a trumpet blast
Made note of preparation. To and fro
The sounds of arms and cries were tossed about,
Like echoes from a cave, and the vast bounds
Seethed out their soldiers, till the line grew strong,
And stars of light glittered throughout the plain,
Shot from the bright caparison of war.

Then the loud signal of advance was made,
And forward rushed the army, like a wave
With tossing crests, towards the narrow pass.
Onward they came until the space between
Had dwindled to a furlong. Then they stayed ;
And for a while the men on either side
Stood sternly and in silence—in a calm
Too dead to last. The very breath was drawn
In troubled snatches, and the hands were clenched
Until the spear-points trembled with a pulse.

Then the deep still was broken as a glass,
Sounded the charge, and forward, with a shout,
The rushing armies met in mid career.
Thousands were launched at hundreds ; but the last,
Flanked by the rocks, gave not an inch of ground,
But bore them up as thousands. Every man
Bore death before him, life within his heart.
On pressed the Syrians, as a band of wolves
Panting for blood, till dying in their own ;
Or like the waves upon a tideless sea,
That beat and beat for ever on the strand,
But gain no vantage. Then the Maccabee,
Noting the war with ever-watchful eye,
Bade blow the trumpet with a mightier blast ;
And, as a rock rolls down upon the plain,
The Jewish warriors dashed upon the foe,
When the attack was waning. Then the play
Of sword-blades flashing in the morning sun,

Scattering the life-drops as they rose and fell,
Grew thick and fast ; and shouts, and dying groans,
And the wild clang of steel rose o'er the hills,
And bore the tale of death to distant towns.

A little while—the onward course was stayed ;
A little while—the din of answering blows ;
A little while—the shout that echoed shout :
But as the sword of Judas rose to smite,
Nor wearied of its smiting, every blow
Supplied a gap for “ Onwards ; ” and the cry
Of “ Onwards ! ” followed with the curse of death.
The leading ensigns wavered, rose, and sank ;
And, backward borne, yet fighting to the last,
The choicest warriors of Syria's host
Fell in their blood, and rank and order lost—
All was confusion until all was flight.
And mingled spears, and swords, and helms, and shields,
And broken staves, and corpses strewed the ground.

In vain the leaders sought to stem the rout,
To wage encounter with the rushing tide.
Onward it swept, and bore them on its crest ;
And onward, like an eagle in its flight,
Smiting and sparing not, the victor host
Swept after, in the vengeance of the Lord.

And so the sword of slaughter dashed along,
Until the day was weary of its dead,

And the worn victors kept nor rank nor place,
And loitered in the slaying. Then they paused
Hard by the well that is in Beeroth.

But then, as ye have seen a little cloud
Gathering the vapour even as it rolled
Until it darkened all the firmament,
So, one by one, the straggling Syrians came,
Men who escaped and let the fight go by,
Unto one head, and, gathering arms and force,
Outnumbering the victors, followed them,
And came upon them in their weariness.

The battle rose again ; but worn and faint,
And scattered in the field, the patriot band
Fought, slaying to be slain. The tired arm
Scarce raised the shield, and weak and short the blow.

Walled round with foes, but fighting like a god,
Bleeding but killing, bearing death in death,
Judas stood fast o'er Eleazar's corpse,
Until the stream that flowed from many wounds
Wavered the hand, and, as the sight swam round,
Seeking a foe in vacancy, he sank ;
And then a shout arose. The fight was won.

They gathered round, and, as they stood and gazed,
The eyelids opened, and with gasping lips

He groaned for water. Even Syrian hearts
Bent at the sound. They filled a vacant helm
With water from the well. He drank and died.

Two thousand years and more have come and gone,
And many a foreign host hath borne its arms
O'er the fair land that Judas died to save.
Scattered and peeled, as aliens in the world,
In other climes the tribes of Jewry roam ;
And the appointed garden of the Lord
Mourns for His people, but it mourns in vain.
Yet to this day, using unwitting words,
The Arab guide will bid the traveller stop
And mark the ruin of the Hero's Well.

THE FELON'S RACE.

THE summer sun is on the earth,
The corn is joying in its birth,
And you might think the sleeping sea
Dreamt of its own immensity,
And the light wavelets in their flow
Were but its breathings soft and low.
There is joy in the land, there is joy in the hall,
Welcome and plenty for one and all ;
And Stainby's gates are opened wide
To greet the bridegroom and the bride,
And shouts and laughter come over the lea,
And the gush of bells in their jubilee—
Bells that bear in every tone
Blessings on those who now are one.

They are seen from the wall, a goodly throng.
Cease for a moment the feast and the song ;
Up from the tables and round to the gate,—
When the master is coming the flagon can wait.

Nearer they came, till all might tell
The name of every rider well.
And foremost of the bright array
Ralph of the Keep on his gallant bay,
And gently resting on his side
Is the tender hand of the new-made bride.
And he gathers it up within his own,
Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone,
And turns to whisper in her ear
Words of blessing, words of cheer,
Words that none besides may hear,
Words that find their sole replies
In gentle touch and loving eyes.

The shouts are echoing o'er the tide
As up the narrow causeway ride
 The leaders of the band.
Yet, ere is reached the clamorous crowd,
Sudden a ring sounds sharp and loud.
From yon low bush a little cloud
 Uprises like a hand.

With one short gasp, one cry of pain,
One fevered tossing of the mane,
 One quick convulsive bound,
Ere yet the life-blood finds its way
Through to the light, the gallant bay
 Falls headlong to the ground.

For one brief moment all was still.
It passed, and o'er the startled hill

Shouting, and cry, and dint of steed
Urged onward to the utmost speed,
And curses loud and high,
And long-drawn sobs, and shrieks for aid,
And pistol shot and clang of blade
Rang upward to the sky.

As lion at the scent of foes,
Quick from the dust Ralph Stainby rose,
Unhurt, but crimsoned with the gore
Of the slain horse, and, rising, bore,
Safe held within his sheltering arm,
All pale and breathless with alarm,
His latest gift. His flashing eye
One moment sought his enemy ;
Marked how his kinsmen scoured the heath
Whence flew the messenger of death ;
Saw, like a quarry from the hounds,
With desperate race and frantic bounds,
O'er gorse and ditch and broken hedge,
Striving to gain the mountain's edge,
Only one man. A pitying light
Passed o'er his visage at the sight.
He turned, his darling's fears to quell,
And learn and show that all was well.
And then, as quickly gathered round,
Hiding the blood-encumbered ground,
Servant and stranger, kin and friend,
Their care to speak, their aid to lend,

With one long glance in sorrow cast
On that poor friend whose love had passed,
'Midst gratulations long and deep,
Slowly they moved towards the keep.

On to the cliff, in headlong strife,
Fleet as the footsteps of the wind,—
On to the cliff, the prize is life,
The roar of blood is close behind,—

On to the cliff, with pant and strain,
With bleeding limbs and garments torn,
The only chance of life to gain,
O'er heath and brake and tangled thorn,

He dashes on, a desperate man,
To where the mighty steeps descend.
The speed with which that race began
Can scarce continue to the end.

Behind him press the bitter foe,
Their bullets hurtle in the air,
And gleaming bright are swords that know
To smite, but know not how to spare.

On to the cliff! The goal is nigh,
It needeth but one struggle more ;
Near and more near, the venger's cry
Is fiercer than a tiger's roar.

Down ! No, 'twas but a moment's thrill
That stayed the runner's course.
Onwards he dashes up the hill,
Straining for life his dying force.

The cliff is won, pursuit is o'er.
There is a passage from the head,
Broken and rough, towards the shore,
But few there be that dare to tread.

Downward he goes. The cliff is high.
O God, it is a fearful sight !
Sure must the foot be, clear his eye
Who tries that path and treads aright.

Downward the foemen cast their eyes,
As gathered on the height they stand,
And the deep curse of balked surprise
Sounds sternly 'mid the wondering band.

Light as the sea-bird on the wing,
Fresh from its rest at dawn of day,
With step and spring, with grasp and swing
Adown the cliff he wins his way.

A flash of light, a ringing shot,
The echo of a stifled groan,
A white despairing face, a blot
Of crimson on the virgin stone,

A clutching of the feeble hand,
A yielding of the palsied knee,
A low dead fall upon the strand,
And—a great silence o'er the sea.

The chase was o'er. Long time hath sped,
And children long since born are dead
Beneath the weight of years. Decay
Hath worn the crumbling cliffs away,
Yet to the broken margin still,
From yon black stone far down the hill,
A path the husbandmen can trace,
And call the track the Felon's Race.

THE LAST OF THE FAIRIES.

A low sad wail at Christmas-tide. The morning sun
is bright,
And the rime, unthawed upon the ground, is sparkling
in the light.
No breath of wind to stir the leaves that loved the
wind so well ;
That loved its kisses till they died what time the
autumn fell.
The old old time is dying, and the leaves are dead
and sere ;
But a promise lies in the dawning day and the birth
of the coming year.
The squirrel sleeps in its mossy nest, in spring to
wake again ;
There's a flutter of life in the tiny heart of the
autumn-buried grain,
And the frozen brook shall melt in the sun, and swell
with the early rain.

The heavens above are singing, "God's arms are
opened wide,"

And on earth the bells are ringing, "Welcome to
Christmas-tide."

Yet, from yon withered bracken tuft, there comes a
low sad cry,

As of one who hath no joy to live, yet dares not hope
to die.

As the wintry wind at midnight through the boughs of
a blasted tree,

The last of all the fairy race moaned in her misery.

"All, all alone in a world of life ! For me no sister's
hand ;

I can but trace in blighted rings the steps of the fairy
band.

The glories of the summer night are lost in the
winter day,

And the very echoes of our songs have long since
died away.

New summer nights will not restore the voices of the
dead ;

New blades will grow untrodden where their feet were
wont to tread.

Without a joy, without a hope ; a shadow and a
sigh ;

The gift of life is broken now, and cancelled when I
die,

I've heard that with the race of man life lies not in
the breath ;

There's a wondrous joy above the sky after an earthly
death.

It may be so—I do not know,—but unto us is given
The power below to feel our woe, without a hope of
heaven,”

Then brighter grew the morning sun, and brighter
shone the rime,

And clearer rang the distant bells, “Welcome to
Christmas time.

Goodwill and living love to all. God's arms are
opened wide.”

“Welcome,” the glorious heavens sang. “Welcome,”
the earth replied.

“False earth, false sky,” the fairy said, “what
welcome can there be?

What welcome to the withered leaves? What welcome
unto me?”

Again she moaned, “The coming year cannot revive
the past ;

Time can but bring me misery, and pain and death
at last.”

Then, in the glow of the warming sun, the frost gems
thawed away,

And countless drops of glittering dew shone in the
light of day,

And under their sheen lay the emerald green of the
soft and glossy sward,

And every drop and every blade sang, "Glory to the
Lord!"

Then the sweet bells ceased, but from the church
there came the voice of song ;

Gently it stole from the distant porch, and swelled as
it rolled along ;

And to the open sky uprose that wondrous note of
praise,

And the dew passed upward with it, in the path of the
warming rays.

Then a great peace reigned on all the earth, and the
fairy turned on the sod,

And hid herself from the light, in fear of the accents
of her God.

She listened : all was silent. She looked, but all was
still,

From the forest glade in the vale below to the top of
the far-off hill ;

And the peace that was around her enwrapped her as
she lay,

Till in the silent depth of sleep her sorrow died away.

And, in her dream, she saw the leaves, all bare and
brown and dead,

Lie blown and scattered by the wind, or where they
had been shed ;

But each in its allotted place, and not as chance had led.

For angels marked the falling seed, and smoothed the
bed in love,

And gently placed the withering leaves around it and
above.

The leaves that had cherished the infant seed, as they
grew on the parent stem,

Still watched in death o'er the tender germ, and God
watched over them.

And all the long long winter their mould lay close
and warm,

And shielded it from frost and snow, and shielded from
the storm ;

Till as the year grew soft and clear uprose the first-
born shoots ;

And then still closer in decay they gathered round
the roots,

And mingled with the rising sap, and in new leaf and
flower

Joyed as of old in the throb of life, and blessed the
breeze and shower.

And, as through every vein the sap in living impulse
poured,

The dead leaves, sprung again to life, sang, " Glory to
the Lord ! "

And then at last there came a voice, " God loveth
not in vain,

And love sent down, or stays on earth, or turns to
God again :

And life is love, and God is love—the breath of His
own word ;
Therefore all living, loving things cry, ‘Glory to the
Lord !’
In love He giveth life, with life the power to love is
given,
And God’s own essence, love, returns to live in God
in heaven.”

Perchance it was the lesson that the dream and voice
had taught ;
Perchance some angel blessed her with the peace that
passeth thought ;—
I do not know, and may not say : but when at last
she woke,
Her heart went forth to join the words that all around
her spoke.

“Not all alone—not all alone. Where’er the wind
can blow,
Be mine to feel another’s joy, to soothe another’s woe ;
In kindly thoughts, and kindly words, to render God
His own ;
And in the unison of love to be no more alone ;
And when the hand of death my life shall from the
earth dis sever,
That life shall fade in love, and love shall be with
God for ever.”

*THE LEGEND OF HAWKSTONE
CASTLE.*

I,

It was in the days of the fairies, in the days so long
ago,
When the glades of the woods were filled at night with
music weird and low,
When the moonlight smiled as tiny forms across the
beams would pass,
And daylight showed the rings their steps had left
upon the grass.

II.

The Lord of Hawkstone and his men forth to the
chase had gone,
And by the wood, with babe on arm, his lady sat
alone,—
Her firstborn babe, her own, that laid so dear against
her breast.
The setting sun showed clear and broad low down
upon the west :

The lady saw the golden light that tinged the castle wall,
And where on mound and winding stream the lengthening shadows fall ;
And o'er and round her, as she sat amidst the clustering trees,
Came the twittering of the nesting birds, the droning of the bees.
The eye scarce saw, the ear scarce heard ; but scene and music stole
Like a gentle dream of gladness o'er the beating of the soul.
And slowly from her lips as dropped some now-forgotten lay,
A deep sleep on that lady came at closing of the day.

III.

The latest gleams of sunlight had left the mountain head ;
One by one the stars looked down to see if the day had fled,
And, peering through the gathering night, called on the moon to rise,
And decked themselves in robes of light to meet her in the skies.
Then through the wood the fairy horn, with strange and mystic swell,
Awoke the fays that slumbering lay in flow'ret, fern, and dell ;

And o'er the green, around the queen, to pay the
homage due,
Skimming along with shout and song the little army
flew ;
And in and out, with song and shout, passed on the
elfin band,
And the moonbeams glance on flight or dance as
guides the leader's wand ; -
Through dell and glade, through light and shade,
encircling round and round,
Till they came where that lady fair lay sleeping on
the ground.

IV.

Obedient to the queen's command,
A moment paused the rushing band ;
Then, at a sign, arrayed the ring
In silence deep, with folded wing,
Till softly rose in measured chime
The chanting of the magic rhyme.

V.

“Through the woods and on the hill,
In the shadowland of night,
Where the darkness croucheth still ;
Where the moon is shining bright ;
Where the silver stars can peep,
Looking down with liquid ray ;

Where the gentle flowers sleep,
Waiting for the coming day,—
There at night we freely roam,
For the woodland is our home.

“Wheresoever falls the dew,
All that meet us on the way
Learn to pay the ransom true ;
None may dare to disobey.
Since the fairy’s reign began
On the stream and on the wold,
Ours it is to bless or ban,
Ours to loose and ours to hold.
When the night has called the hour,
All are in the fairies’ power.

“While the ring our footsteps make
Circled round the place of rest,
Lo, the sleeping babe we take
Gently from its mother’s breast,
Seal the sleep upon her eyes,
Close the ear and numb the sense,
Till secure we hold the prize
Gathered in its innocence:
Fairies, now the deed is done ;
She has lost, and we have won.”

VI.

Gently they moved, in order meet,
To the cadence low and sweet,
Round the sleepers and the queen,
Clad in robes of wondrous sheen.
While the measure rose and fell,
You might have seen them passing well
 In ring of glittering light ;
But as the latest accents died
In echoes at the forest side,
There came the rush as of a blast,
And queen and band and infant passed
 Away from mortal sight.

VII.

The wondering servants waited long ; at last, in doubt
 and fear,
Through the deep gloom of night they sought their
 lady far and near.
They sought her in the castle ground, beside the
 winding stream ;
They saw the shadow of the bat, they heard the
 night bird scream.
Among the gorse, and o'er the mound, and through
 the spreading plain,
With deepening fears they called and looked, but
 called and looked in vain,

Until they found her, all alone, wrapt in her slumber
still,
Beneath the deep-branched trees upon the rising of
the hill.

VIII.

Time past. The seekers for the child returned, their
quest not won :
With man and hound they scoured the ground, but
traces found they none ;
And village crones might guess and talk, none knew
and none might say
Or how or where the infant heir of Hawkstone passed
away.

IX.

The lady lay within her bower, hard beaten by the
blow,
Her soul bent down to earth beneath the crushing
weight of woe.
From morn to night she moaned, and wept from night
to morn again,
Nor night nor morning brought relief from the deep-
driven pain.
In vain the sorrowing baron strove to soothe with
loving care
The dark deep wound of misery encankered by
despair.

At times she slept, but in her sleep no kindly light
was given ;
No rest could bless with peace a life from which all
joy was riven.
She lived to die. At last, at last, when death seemed
drawing near,
And sleep forerunning death had brought strange
voices to her ear,
Nor form, nor certain sound was there. She dreamt,
and that was all,
But on her in the dream a hope from heaven seemed
to fall ;
Like dew upon the tender grass, its gentle influence
spread,
Till it gathered the strength of the voice that raised
the living from the dead.
She woke, she rose, she called for food. So bright
and strange her eye,
Her maidens thought the fire of life had risen but to
die.
She spake—a power was in her speech ; and silently,
in dread,
The listeners heard her utterance as a message from
the dead.
Few were her words. Her accents fell in clear and
ordered tone,—
'Twas hers that night to seek the wood untended and
alone.

X.

The night has come, and o'er the stream the lady held
 her way,
 To where, upon the rising hill, the silent moonbeams
 lay.
 They watched her from the castle wall all in the clear
 moonlight,
 Until, beneath the branching trees, she faded from
 the sight.

XI.

Clad in robes of wondrous sheen
 Around the beauty of the queen,
 Elfin knight and lady fay,
 Heralds and minstrels in fair array,
 Brightest and best of the fairy band,
 Ranged in marshalled order stand.

XII.

“Sound the blast. Let the word go forth,
 East and west, and south and north,
 Whoso hath suffered from fairy's spite
 Let him come and challenge the act to-night.
 The court has met to hear the cause
 According to the fairy laws,
 Long since by masters wise ordained,
 That the right be held and the wrong restrained,

And justice rendered clear."
Three times the trumpet blast was heard,
And thrice the heralds raised the word,
"Let all who will appear."

XIII.

Many a year has passed and gone
Since last before the fairy throne
The challenge answer found.
Yet still on the appointed night
Their lady held the ancient rite,
And bade the trumpets sound.

XIV.

To-night they sound, but who shall dare,
When called, alone to venture there?
Though he who wins may bear away,
Who loses there for aye must stay,
And forfeit all his human life
In punishment for bootless strife.

XV.

The trumpets ceased. Their closing sound
Passed through the echoes all around
In softly thrilling fall.
A human foot is on the sod,
A human form beneath the trees,

A human voice upon the breeze
Speaks boldly : " In the name of God,

I answer to the call.

From the bed of death and pain
I come to claim my own again.

God gave to me a child

Fair as the heaven above. But you,

Seeking to make the gift untrue,

Fouling the love in mercy sent

Down from the blessed firmament,

Wrought your dark magic as he lay,

And stole the sleeping babe away.

In this, your Court of Right, I claim

My own, in His the Holiest name,

Holy and undefiled."

XVI.

"The child has been bathed in the midnight dew ;

His brow has been marked by the mystic yew ;

He has slept on the moss to the lullaby

Of the night-winds' whirl and the owlets' cry,

Wrapped in the skin of the speckled snake,

Where the glow-worms wind beneath the brake.

Every rite has been duly done

To win him and keep him and make him our own.

In the fairy land, in the hour of night,

We found him asleep 'neath the moonbeams bright,

And the spell we wrought as we bore him away

Will bind his soul to the judgment day."

XVII.

Stately and firm the lady stood,
Though for a space the coward blood
Had fled towards the troubled heart
 And left her face so pale.
Her lips were slightly drawn apart,
And through them came the quickened breath
As when a sleeper laboureth
 To cry without avail.

XVIII.

Words to the tongue, blood to the cheek
Returned. She raised her head to speak,
And, though the soul was all in flame,
Slow and clear the accents came.
“Your rites can never move,” she said,
“The blessing that on him was laid,
What time before the sacred shrine
His brow was marked with the hallowed sign,
 His sins all washed away.
My child, my own, to me was given ;
My love is sanctified by Heaven,
 Strong as the light of day.
And in that strength of love I came
To claim my child, and bear him home,
 To dare the strength ye own.

Let elfin knight take spell and brand,
As here, all weaponless, I stand,
 A woman, and alone.
I claim the trial of the fight,
And Heaven shall prove which has the right,
 And thus my love be shown."

She spake, and angry brows were seen,
 And angry murmurs rose,
As, gathering round their startled queen,
 The hurried council close.

XIX.

Many a year had come and gone
Since last before the fairy throne
 Such challenge had been given ;
And scarce could mortal tongue have power
To brave them in the midnight hour,
 Save by the will of Heaven.
The court may not the claim deny,
Nor champion from the conflict fly,
And thus, at last, with troubled eye,
Slowly the monarch made reply :
 " Be it as thou hast said.
But if thy boasted powers fail,
If hand or tongue or spirit quail,
If spell or spear or brand prevail,
 Thy blood be on thy head.

Bring in the prize." By hands unseen
Unharm'd upon the sword of green
The sleeping babe was laid.
One look of love the mother sent,
One sob of love her bosom rent ;
She bowed the head and pray'd.

xx.

As carved in marble stood she there,
And, save by look and sob and prayer,
Nor motion made nor sign ;
With folded arms and bended head,
Waiting the onslaught dark and dread,
In trust on power Divine.

xxi.

The fairy train hath pass'd. A gloom
Like that which by the prophet's doom
O'er Egypt's land was spread,
Like a thick mantle gathered slow ;
And then came shrieks and screams of woe,
And wild winds rushing to and fro,
And phantom lights of sickly glow,
And visions of the dead.

Around they drew, but none might dare
To pierce the atmosphere of prayer.
In vain ; nor sound nor sight

Might check the words that rose on high,
Nor draw one glance, nor cause one cry
Of anguish or affright.

Baffled they fled, and silence fell
On the thick wood and startled dell
Awhile ; and then the champion came,
Girt in a panoply of flame,
His charger red with blood.
Rushing down with headlong force,
Swift as the storm-fiend in his course,
To where the lady stood,
Onward he came. A fruitless race ;
Still the lady held her place.
Though thick and fast his falchion swept
Ever her guard an angel kept,
And turned the blows aside.
And love a sanctuary made,
Broke down the terror of his blade,
And all his power defied.

XXII.

So went the fight, till, unsubdued,
By faith, by prayer, by love endued,
She seized his lifted hand.
Vainly to loose that clasp he strove,
The mighty power of mother's love
Tore down the useless brand.

Trembling he stands before her now ;
She signs the cross upon his brow,
 The cross upon his breast.
And as he falls before her feet,
She hears in accents low and sweet,
 “ Lo, I have given thee rest.”

XXIII.

Then through the forest's echoes broke
 One long, low sob of joy,
As underneath the branching oak
 She knelt to raise her boy.

THE LIFEBOAT.

THE hollow voice of Winter
Came moaning to the land ;
With deepening frown, as the sun went down,
She scowled upon the strand.
Her blast came o'er the waters
In fitful gusts, and strong,
As she howled to the waves of coming death,
And hurried them along.
The startled billows heard her,
And tossed their crests on high ;
And, rushing madly to the shore,
They shouted in reply.
The white cliffs heard the summons,
As onward still it flew ;
And rock and cavern, echoing loud,
Screamed forth the curse anew.
As the sword that swept through Egypt
'Ere Israel's sons were free,
As the stream that breaks its channel
And dashes to the sea,

That mighty roar burst on us,
And the earth reeled to and fro
With the wild lament of thousands,
With mourning and with woe.
Through all the coasts of England
It was a fearful night—
A night of doubt and horror,
Of trembling and affright.
'The waters boiled with caverned wind,
The blast was thick with foam,
The very elements themselves
Were battling for a home ;
And through the shadows of the night
Uprose the crested waves,
Like headstones in a field that held
A myriad years of graves.
No fitful gust, no stop, no stay,
No whispers now were there,
No dubious note of mystic tone
Those warring forces bare ;
But winds and waves and crags gave forth
One long continued roar.
There had not been so fierce a storm
For forty years and more.
It came—a low, dull murmur
Along the tempest came,
A long, low sound that followed hard
On the phantom of a flame.

And there were men who heard it,
And stood with straining eyes,
And hearts that flew towards the spot
Whence the light seemed to rise.
Again upon the waiting eye
That flashing message broke,
And to the listening ear again
That pleading murmur spoke.
Away! away! each moment
Is fraught with a human life.
Now, who are they will be men to-day,
And venture for the strife?
Now, who will dare the tempest
On such a night as this?
Who loveth man for the sake of man,
And will danger a life for his?

'Tis answered. Calm and steady,
With hearts prepared they come,
Cast but one glance upon the storm,
And one long look on home.

There is no regal splendour,
No banner streaming far,
No thrilling deeds of high-drawn birth,
To cheer them to the war.
No lovely maiden lights them
To battle with her smile;
No trumpet flourish breaks the air
For many a leaguered mile;

No nation waits with triumph
To bring them home again,
Or tasks herself to find rewards
For the remnant from the slain :
But there, within yon hollow,
That hardly you can see,
Are wives and mothers weeping,
And infants round the knee.
And all before is darkness,
And all behind is fear ;
And the rising sob, but half suppressed,
Mingles with words of cheer.

Dressed in their fishers' garments,
A gallant band and true,
There stood they, nothing daunted
That raging flood to view.
They looked on the roaring mountains,
All white with angry foam,
And the prayer went up and a blessing dwelt
In one long look on home.

That look was past, and bringing
The lifeboat to the shore,
Each man stepped boldly to his place,
And firmly grasped his oar ;
And with a will she darted
Right on the thundering tide.
Now Heaven preserve that boat and crew,
And make it safely ride !

The fierce tornado saw them,
And called on the waves to rise :
“ These be the sons of men who dare
Our empire to despise.”
And fiercer still, and fiercer
The awful tumult grew,
And faster rolled the deepening swell,
And furious the tempest fell
On the devoted crew.

And once and twice and thrice again
It bore them sternly back ;
But the strong arms leant and the stout oars bent,
They parted on the track.
As a lion 'midst the hunters
Who compass him around,
Upstarting from his noonday lair,
Breaks headlong through the circling snare
And frees him with a bound,
So gallantly the lifeboat
Swept through the raging spray,
And, like a conquering spirit, passed
Along the hostile way.

She lay upon the waters,
A ship that none could save,
One broadside turned to heaven,
And one towards the wave,

Circled with broken timbers
That pinnaced the sea,
And spars and shrouds and shivered masts
And cordage floating free,
And angry foam and drowning men—
A piteous sight to see.

She lay upon the waters,
And every wave that passed
Just raised her up to meet the next
That hurried on the blast.
And groaning joints and creaking bends
In mournful accents told
How sternly broke each following stroke
Unceasingly that rolled.

“The lifeboat !” “ Ay, the lifeboat !”
And blessings rose on high,
And fluttering sobs and shouts of joy,
And many a broken cry.
And hands told one another,
In long and close impress,
The depth of misery that had filled
The hours of distress ;
And eyes that erst unwetted,
Wept like a little child,
And, looking down on eyes that loved,
Spake happiness and smiled,

She paused but for a moment,
As onward still she passed
To save a beaten wretch who clung
Unto a broken mast.
And then again, in answer
To piteous cries for aid,
Another and another life
A glory round her made.

Yet even while she rescued,
Still while she strove to save,
The demons of the storm spurred hard
On the remorseless wave ;
And full upon her counter
The hostile torrent smote,
And dashing on in frantic pride
The water poured from every side
Into the gallant boat.

She quivered for a moment
Before the angry main :
The hand of God was on her,
She righted well again.
She righted well, and dashing
But faster for the check,
Still nearer drew where clung the few
Still lingering on the wreck.

Hard task it was, and weary,
To get them safely down
'Midst breaking seas and sudden plunge,
And dashing timbers' fearful lunge,
And nature's blackest frown.
But one by one descended,
Till she could hold no more ;
Then, with a promise to return
Soon as they reached the destined bourne,
They parted for the shore.

And lids were wet at parting,
Though eyes looked back to smile,
And welcomed hopes that, scarce believed,
Still cheered them for a while.
But from the few survivors
Who must perforce abide
Burst forth a cheer that shook the winds,
And thundered o'er the tide.
They knew the weak and helpless
In the hand of God were safe ;
What care they now though tempests blow,
And angry waters chafe !

The strong arms leant and the stout oars bent,
The waters felt their force,
As onward right to the guiding light
They set the homeward course,

And dashing o'er the billows,
Approached the whitened strand,
Swept through the surges of the coast,
And felt the welcome land.
Then, by the past undaunted,
Again they dared the war,
Until the last survivor stood
In safety on the shore.

The waters roared and the tempest blew,
But louder round the throne
The blessings pealed from those whom Death
Had counted as his own.
And, writ in tears of praises,
Stamp'd with the seal of light,
Shone bright in heaven each glorious name
Who boldly through the tempest came
On that disastrous night.

THE PRISON OF THE DANE.

In the year A.D. 787 the first of the Danish ships appears to have visited the shores of England. Some years prior to this the Saxons had learned from tales of travellers of a people whose homes were found amongst the creeks and waterways on the shores to the east of the Northern Ocean, but they knew little of that race which was afterwards to play so important a part in the history of our country. In the year above named, the crew of one of their ships landed on the coast of Dorset. The reeve of the shire, not knowing who or what manner of men they were, caused them to be taken to Dorchester that they might there render an account of themselves, and this they appear to have done in an unexpected manner, for we read that "they slew men." Within a very few years after this, not only the Saxons on the seaboard, but those far in the interior of the country along the east coast, right up to Northumbria, learnt by bitter experience who and what the Danes were. Callous plunderers, they had no pity for those whom they attacked. Men and women fell before them or were reserved for torture; children were tossed from pike to pike, and girls were carried away into slavery. Harrying far and wide, they robbed monasteries and treasures, slew the priests at the altar, and carried fire and sword into the heart of the country. At first their attacks were made with the sole object of shedding blood and obtaining booty; but afterwards "they were ready to ransack a province, and to return with their ships filled with goods from the homesteads of the

land kings, and they were equally prepared, if the chance came in their way, to hold the land for themselves and send for their families to join them in the new home across the sea."

At first, and probably at times afterwards, a few ships only would dart down on the coast, and retreat with their plunder as rapidly as they came ; but as years went on larger expeditions were fitted out, and the mere foray of sea-robbers met by the sheriff and those whom he could hastily gather together, was changed into the invasion of an army to be opposed only by a royal force.

Whether in small or large numbers, the Danes swept over the sea in their long black ships, swan-necked, dragon-prowed, driven along either by a bank of oars, or, when the wind was favourable, by huge dark red sails. From the descriptions received, and from one or two examples lately unearthed, these ships appear to have been half-decked, between sixty and seventy feet in length, and from twelve to sixteen feet broad. They were somewhat roughly made, the timbers in some instances only lashed together or fastened with wooden pegs or forks. Drawing only about three or four feet of water, they were capable of being driven at considerable speed, and from their lightness could easily be drawn up upon a beach or carried by the crew over shallows when ascending inland waters. Round their ships, when they disembarked and had drawn them out of the reach of the tide, the pirates made a fortified camp, and chose out from among themselves those to whom was allotted the duty of protecting their means of return. To this camp, if they were opposed too strongly, they could retreat, and from thence keep their enemies at bay until they had pushed their vessels into the water and were able to embark and sail away. Their manner was, after overcoming any opposition offered, to seize such horses as they could find, and then, after scouring the neighbouring country, killing, burning, and robbing, they returned with their spoil to the ships.

Axes, clubs, brown shining swords, and long rough-handled spears were their principal weapons ; while, in addition to such other defensive arms as each one might carry, they in many

cases wore over or above the face the likeness of a boar's head painted in divers colours and barded in the fire. Well skilled as they were in warfare, greedy for spoil, and ruthless in fight, it is not to be wondered at if the prayer went up from the whole of Britain, "Deliver us, O Lord, from the frenzy of the Northmen."

In those days the soldier was a robber, warfare was the noblest occupation of man, death in the field the only fitting end to life. But when their arms were thrown aside, the Danes seem to have been gentle and loving to their home ties, and filled with a weird poetry, partly the result of their natural disposition, and partly that of training and of surrounding circumstances. Winning their way through the gloom of tangled forests or on broken shores, they dreamt of elves and supernatural powers, and in the flash of the lightning and the roar of the thunder they recognized the majesty of Wodin, the ringing of the hammer of Thor. They knew, too, or felt that there had been a time when, in the first creation, all things had been bright and glorious, but that by the fatal power of the blind demon of war, Baldr, the sun-god, the spirit of joy and beauty, had been overthrown and laid in death in the lap of Hel. Whether it was part of an old legend, or whether it was the result of the mixture of the religion of "the White Christ" with that of the Norse gods, we do not know; but very beautiful is the description given by their writers of the fate which falls on the world in the twilight of the gods and the prophecy of brighter days. "The sword age, the wolf age is coming, when the love of money shall scatter murder and harlotry over the earth. The powers of evil will be unloosed; the gods themselves fall in the desperate death struggle; fire consume the tree of life, and the solid earth and the dimmed sun sink for ever in the ocean. But a greener earth will rise out of the sea, lighted up by a brighter heaven, and Baldr will ascend from Hel to reign over new gods and nobler men."*

* Prose "Edda," c. 49, 51. Pearson's "Early and Middle Ages," 156.

Of this higher part of the Danish nature the Saxons knew nothing. They only recognized their enemies as robbers and murderers; and it wants but little imagination to tell with what consternation "the track of the destroying bark" must have been marked by the inhabitants of the coast. From the watch-towers, standing on the heights, the fire-signal would ascend. All the goods that could be hastily collected would be sent along with the old, the women, and the children to the nearest place of defence, and the men would gather together in arms to defend their families and their lives from the blow of the enemy. Unity of action would be the only chance of safety, and the reeve or the headman of the district would give the necessary directions for the coming struggle. Such a place as an old British encampment or mound thrown up for the purpose of protection, not only against the attacks of tribal foes, but also against those of the wolves in winter, would, if near enough, be utilized, and on the spot most likely to be chosen for the attack the Saxon Chief would post his little army.

The Danes did not always succeed; but we may be certain that in any case the fighting would be furious and their losses great. In such a case as that which I have endeavoured to describe, the successful Danes, too much weakened to venture inland, would retreat to their ships, with the intention of returning to their own country with such spoil as they had been able to secure.

Whether the effect of a roller wave, produced by sub-oceanic volcanic agency, even if aided by a simultaneous depression of the coast line, would be such as is stated in the concluding lines, I cannot tell. It may be that in the sudden inburst of water, followed by a certain amount of reflux, every tree and building would be so completely destroyed or overthrown that no trace would be left of that which had been. But even if this be so, can we be surprised if the fishermen and coast-dwellers of old, having heard from their forefathers of an attack by the Danes on the old mound, desperately defended by the Saxon valesmen, and how the baffled pirates on their return murdered

the father and child in Hilda's Tower, connected these facts with the submergence of the coast, and out of many scattered details wove a legend which taught them and their children how the murderers were cut off in the moment of their crime by the sudden dispensation of Divine power?

I.

THERE is tumult in the valley, there is gathering on
the height,
And hands and shaded eyes are strained toward the
dawning light :
To the far away, where the coming day glides between
main and sky,
And the sea-line catches the ray from beyond and
flashes it on to the eye.
O'er sky and sea, o'er wood and lea, the glorious light
is spread ;
O'er the low lands that stretch to the south, and o'er
the northern head.
There's not a breath upon the deep that lies so vast
and still,
And scarcely speak the waves that break on the sand
at the foot of the hill :
But not upon the hill-top are peace and silence found ;
Through all the hamlets in the vale the warning calls
resound.
And men, in sudden roused from sleep, rush up the
mountain side
To where the Peel Tower rests in guard above the
eastern tide ;

And boys and wildered elders wait, or follow as they
may ;
And startled mothers snatch their babes and, weeping,
kneel and pray.

II.

Around the watchers on the height the growing
numbers stand :
Half clothed, half armed, with panting breasts, a wild
and anxious band.
Quick question, quick reply,—the finger pointing o'er
the sea,
And rugged locks tossed from the brow and backward
floating free.
A long stern look ; breath short and hard ; a silence in
the crowd,
And a low murmuring sound that grows to words and
cries aloud ;
As the true eye descries far off upon the distant
main
The fearful messengers of death—the warships of the
Dane.

III.

Still on the hill above the beach the ruined tower is
seen ;
Still to the east the pathway winds through rocks and
slopes of green ;

And still within the valley the earth upturned will
show
Relics and bones of warriors who died there long
ago.
But up the sloping strand, along the south side of the
height,
Have rushed the waves of ocean—the ocean in its
might ;
And when the winds are silent, and the tide, all lulled
to sleep,
Clear and smooth, reveals to light the secrets of the
deep,
Still may you trace the outlined walls far down beneath
the wave—
The walls of Saxon homesteads wrapped in a crystal
grave.
And when the tide is running low, there, farthest from
the shore,
Are the lines of a broken circle, with green weed
covered o'er.
For many an age that circle unchangeable hath stood,
Save in the change of the tinted weed that grows
beneath the flood ;
And still the toilers on the coast the ancient legend
know
Of the old tower that breaks the wave when the tide
is running low.

IV.

Up the vale on the rising ground
British hands had raised a mound
With triple banks embattled round,—
A tribal fort, strengthened anew
What time the Roman eagles flew ;
 And then, as years rolled on,
Neglected now, and now repaired ;
Cumbered with growth, then surface bared ;
Reduced or lengthened in its range,
But losing still from every change,
 Till half its strength was gone.

V.

Short time for action. To the Hold
In haste are sent the weak and old.
The elder halts on his oaken staff,
 With faint and bended head ;
The mother bears her living babe,
 Or the treasures of the dead,
And, sobbing, calls her children round,
 And sends them on before,
Each burdened with a little load
 Clutched from the garnered store.
Cattle and carts with fruit and grain
Are driven over the threatened plain,
 'Midst mingled shout and cry.

'Midst barking of dogs, and clang of thong,
And tramp of feet from the hurrying throng ;
'Midst lowing of herds and bleating of sheep,
Onward they press toward the keep,

The tumult rises high.

Onward they press ; and in the rear,
From every hamlet circled near,
Gathers in arms with sword and spear,
With daggers wrought from pointed bone,
With axe of steel and hatchet of stone,

The little Saxon host.

Onward they press, and the goal is won
Ere yet beneath the noontide sun

The Dane has trod the coast.

VI.

On the shore where the wrack is strown
Stands a tower of rough-hewn stone.
Half a thousand years of storm
Have dashed upon its massive form.
The broken waves their foam have sent
High o'er its topmost battlement.
Wave and wind and snow and rain
Beat on its bulk, but beat in vain.
All unfingered by decay,
Winter and summer, night and day,
Found it and left it bare.

Time seemed to it a thing of nought,
And petty years around it wrought
 To leave it in despair.
And there, in strong but narrowed room,
Anlaf, the Saxon, made his home,
Warrior and chief. The valesmen heard,
And owned the guidance of his word.
Brave and wise and mighty of hand,
He led the council in the land.
Kindly and true, he freely gave,
Nor turned him from the meanest slave ;
And loved by freeman and by thrall,
Meted his equal laws to all.
Wealthy, as riches then were given,
His garners owned the gifts of Heaven ;
But richer in the child that grew,
With golden hair and eyes of blue,
 Beneath his tending love—
A gentle maiden, sweet and good,
Just dawning into womanhood,
Who knelt before her father's chair,
And blessed his toil and soothed his care,
Or sat and prattled at his side,
And sung to him at eventide,
 Like an angel from above.

VII.

When through the vale the warning rolled,
Hilda was sent to the British Hold ;

And Anlaf, seizing axe and shield,
Headed his warriors in the field ;
And silence reigned upon the strand,
Save for the wavelets that lapped on the sand.

VIII.

Onwards still across the waters, sweeping with resist-
less sway,
Come the war-ships—comes the raven, ever croaking
for the prey ;
Come the hearts that know no pity, come the swords
that never spare,
Come the feet beneath whose iron all is blackened,
burned, and bare.
Men and maidens fall before them, till the reeking
stream of gore
Fills for them the cup that mantles in the paradise of
Thor.
And the grating of the vessel-keels upon the flinching
strand
Like the poison of an adder runs through all the
sickening land ;
From the oars in serried motion gleams the radiance
of the sun,
Gleams in fiercer glow from weapons that a hundred
fights have won,
Falls on clubs and dinted targets reddened with a
darker stain,
On the flashing helm of Guthrac, mightiest leader of
the Dane.

IX.

The ships were beached ; the pirate host
 Arrayed in order due ;
High o'er the midst in fatal boast
 The bannered raven flew.
The sun shone on the bird of death,
 And on its ground of gold,
Outborne upon the ocean's breath
 The flashing hues were rolled.
It flew, but not, as oft of yore,
 With beak and wings outspread,
As glorying in the battle's roar,
 And hungering for the dead ;
But the wings seemed weak and listless,
 And weary the head and low,
And there was a sound as of mourning
 As the flag waved to and fro,
And he seemed as one who listens
 To the voice of the fatal call,
And sees from afar the portals
 That lead to Odin's hall.
Yet still he strained in earnest flight
 Towards the battle-field,
As a chief who would spend his failing might,
 And die beneath his shield.

X.

On that omen, dark and drear,
Gazed the host with looks of fear ;
Men of war, they knew full well
The face of death when warriors fell.
Little they recked when the strife was high
Who should live or who should die—
All too strong their souls and brave
To heed the terrors of the grave ;
But none so bold but his heart sank low
As on that augury of woe

His upward glance was thrown,
And his eye turned to his neighbour's face,
And sought, nor sought in vain, to trace
The doubts that marked his own.
But Guthrac spake : " The conqueror's soul
Is wasted by delay,
The power of the raven's wing
Faints for the lack of prey."

XI.

Then swords and axes flashed on high,
And loudly rang the battle-cry.
It seemed as though the mystic bird
That gallant shout of war had heard,
And roused his strength again :
No longer drooping at his side,
His glossy pinions opened wide ;

His head was raised, his straining beak
In wonted accents seemed to speak,
And clamour for the slain.

XII.

“Forwards!” Again the shout upsprings,
The march is set, the armour rings,
The pillaged tower is left behind,
Across the broken shore they wind
With heedful tread, as men who know
To meet and foil an ambushed foe,
If ambushed foe there be.
A needless care. Nor human sound,
Nor low of kine, nor bay of hound
Is heard, nor seen a hostile band;
And silence lies upon the land
As moonlight on the sea.

XIII.

The nearest homesteads yield a prize
Of little worth to eager eyes;
A few small loads of meal and grain
And rustic tools are all they gain,
As through deserted barn and hall
Their rushing footsteps echoing fall.
Then disappointment to the hand,
In anger brings the kindled brand,

And the strong fire roars its tale
Of spiteful fury up the vale.

XIV.

When first the Saxons saw their foes,
Nor word nor cry nor shout arose,—
 Such was the chief's command ;
But when in quick succession fell
Before the desecrating spell
The simple beauties love had wrought,
The homes to which that love was brought,
The porches twined with clustering flowers,
The labours of their peaceful hours,
Reddened in flame or lost in smoke,
A wild fierce yell of vengeance broke
 From all the patriot band.
And as the blackened volumes rolled
Up the long glen and past the Hold,
 O'er plain and wood and down
Rang man's deep curse and woman's cry,
While frightened children veiled the eye
 Behind their mother's gown.

XV.

That shout, that cry rang far and wide.
In accents hoarse the Danes replied,
And at their leader's signal drew
Round where the bannered raven flew,

And man by man and shield by shield
In order moved along the field,
And placed their flag and ranged the host
A bowshot from the Saxon post.

XVI.

The beams of the failing sun are shed
On the clouds that roll o'er the mountain head,
O'er the mountain rolling slow,
Rimmed with silver and with snow ;
And the rise of the wind, with moan and wail,
Sweeps in gusts along the vale,
And still and again is heard the roar
Of the waves as they beat upon the shore.

XVII.

Then, as wolves upon the quarry,
 Pealing loud their battle-song,
Rushed the foremost of the Danesmen,
 Rushed the strongest of the strong,
Lightly bounded through the heather,
 Lightly bounded o'er the rill,
Crossed the banks, and stemmed the boulders,
 At the rising of the hill.
There was seen the sword of Eric,
 Oswald's ponderous axe was there ;
There the iron mace of Baldur,
 Mighty nurseling of the bear.

On they come, the chief and warriors,
Where their ward the Saxons keep ;
Darts are flying, men are dying,
As they labour up the steep.
On they press, while still above them
Rings the shouting of the foe ;
On they press, while still around them
Gallant heads are sinking low.

Blood and groans and death behind them,
Round them hurl of dart and stone,
Up they press, the living heroes,
Heroes that the gods may own,—

XVIII.

Up, and in the shock of battle,
In the war steel's blinding flash,
All unseen the distant lightning,
All unheard the thunder crash.
On and back the battle surges,
Till, with numbers overpressed,
Cloven is the shield of Eric,
Fallen Oswald's dragon crest.
Backward driven, faint and bleeding,
Baldur stumbles o'er the slain.
Hark ! the shouting—comes the rescue,
Guthrac comes, nor comes in vain ;
Fresh upon the mingled tumult,
Comes the fury of the Dane.

XIX.

Louder then the shouts of battle,
Blow for blow and thrust for thrust,
Dane and Saxon sink together
In the violated dust.
Backward borne, yet still defying,
Broken in the desperate strife,
Not one Saxon foot is flying,
Not one cry is raised for life.
Overborne, the bleeding warrior
Flings his useless club away,
Binds his arms around his foemen,
Drives his teeth into the prey,
Till the writhing coils are stiffened,
Life out-trodden in the fray.
Still with dying men surrounded,
Stained with blood from head to heel,
Still unwearied, still unwounded,
Anlaf wields his fatal steel.
Hark ! the Danes have won the fortress :
Woman's scream and children's wail,
Shouts of victors, groans of victim,
Bear afar the fearful tale.
God ! is there no room for pity ?
Is the witness heard on high ?
Demons hold the earth in terror,
And the weak and helpless die.

XX.

Weary, wounded, armour broken,
Blunted axe and failing hands,
All his kinsmen dead around him,
Lone, undaunted, Anlaf stands.
Loud and louder roars the thunder,
Tempest floods are falling fast,
When, amid the closing battle,
Chief to chief they meet at last,
Axe to axe. The lightning's power
Gleams on weapons poised to smite,
And the crashing blow re-echoes
In the darkness of the night ;
Falls the blow as bolt of heaven,
Guthrac's crest is rent in twain,
But the Saxon axe is shivered
On the helmet of the Dane.
For a moment bent the warrior ;
Then, with reeling limb and eye,
Rushed again upon the foeman,
Raised once more his blade on high :
But ere yet that axe descended,
Mustering all his failing breath,
With his clenched fist undefended
Anlaf smote the blow of death,
And before that mighty war-stroke
Mingled blood and bone and brain,
And the smiter and the smitten
Fell together on the plain.

XXI.

Yet some escaped : the night and the storm
Have shielded many a shrinking form,
And the neighbouring thickets lend their aid
And the dark woods a darker shade.
The pillagers have ceased their quest,
And slowly turned them back to rest
To the trysting place beyond the rill,
Where the raven is floating still.
Few the numbers that are left ;
Of their mightiest chief bereft,
They must wait till the light shall tell
Who are they in strife that fell.
Sleep and death together reign
Over the living and the slain.

XXII.

'Midst the helpless band that prayed
Stood the chieftain's little maid,
Motionless, with straining eye,
Tearless in its misery :
Had it not been for her waving hair
She might have been a statue there.
Ever she gazed where Anlaf's crest
Towered high above the rest ;
She watched his blade as it rose and fell,
She heard his shout o'er the battle's swell ;

On him alone her looks were bent,
For him alone her prayers were sent,
As though he only bore the strife,
And in his fate was wrapped her life.
And when the Danesmen stormed the Hold,
And death and rapine round her rolled,
Still had she stood ; but, borne along
In the fierce pressure of the throng,
And lost the hero of the fight
'Midst deepening gloom and driving flight,
Her spirit broken by the strain,
With one low fluttering sob of pain
Fainting she fell ; and as she lay
The sounds of murder passed away.

XXIII.

The storm had ceased ere life anew
O'er the faint soul remembrance threw,
And bade the dreadful past arise
Once more before her swimming eyes.
And deeper still its record burned
Till, thought and consciousness returned,
Stamped the sad knowledge on her heart,
And bade her fill a daughter's part.

XXIV.

Where the shattered war is strown,
Where the dying writhe and groan ;

O'er the soil with blood embrued,
'Midst the corpses pierced and hewed
Hilda passed on ; nor sight nor sound,
Nor treacherous hold on the trampled ground,
Might check the instinct that possessed
And thrilled its power in her breast.
The pitying stars looked down to bless
The maiden in her loneliness.
Oft had she wandered, in days of old,
Up and down the ancient Hold,
Chasing her mates in girlish play,
Or culling the blooms of the summer day.
Well she knew the way to trace
Through all the mazes of the place,
And on in the strength of her will she sped
To where the bravest champions bled,
Where thick on the earth the harvest lay
As the wrack-strewed beach on a stormy day.
With throbbing heart and anxious hand
She searched among the silent band.
Some power Divine her footsteps brought
Where the latest strife was fought,
Her trembling fingers gently led,
And placed them on her father's head.

XXV.

“ Not dead—not dead ! ” The broken cry,
Where hope itself is agony.

The hope that fills the soul with fears,
Dims the parched eye with rushing tears,
Till breaking on with sudden start
The life-blood strains the labouring heart,
And surges on through nerve and vein.
"Was dead, and is alive again."

XXVI.

The winds of night with cooling breath
Had stayed the coming foot of death.
Down by her father's side she knelt,
O'erburdened by the weight of bliss,
And his returning spirit felt
The loving touch, the tender kiss,
And faintly to that love replied,
And spake in accents weak and low,
And blessed him that he had not died
And left his darling to the foe.
Then, from her garments torn, she bound
And strove to close each open wound,
And filled a helm from a little tide
That welled unstained from the fortress' side,
And gave him drink, and sobbed and smiled,
As a mother o'er her child.

XXVII.

Then Anlaf spake. "We may not stay
Here on the Hold till break of day,

For the foemen that remain
Will count the dead and spoil the slain.
None will escape upon the field,
And scarce the wood can shelter yield.
Refuge know I only one
Where their vengeance we may shun.
In the deep cell of our sea-girt tower
We perchance can foil their power
Till the spoilers have left the shore,
And their voices are heard on the coast no more."

XXVIII.

Taught by his word, the maid with speed
Hath sought and found his tethered steed ;
And, aided by her loving strength,
Hath Anlaf raised his frame at length ;
But stern the strain on the faithless limb,
And the brain reeled round and the eye grew dim,
And hardly might he gain his feet,
And win with pain the waiting seat.
But the strain had loosed what the hand had bound,
And the bandage sank from the clotted wound,
And scarce can Hilda staunch again
The blood that dropped from the opened vein.
'Twere hard to tell how oft her care
The burden of his weakness bare,
As on, with heedful eye and tread,
Adown the glen the steed she led.

Far in the gloom the ships lay beached,
And the long strand before her reached.
Then, o'er the stony causeway passed,
She brought her father home at last,
Upheld the broken strength that freed
His burden from the patient steed ;
Then barred secure the oaken door,
And laid him fainting on the floor.

XXIX.

The dying star-song of the night sinks in the dawning
day,
And the dark-blue sheen is changed to green, and the
green fades into grey,
And the sleepers are roused from their slumbers, and
at last the Danesmen know
How few of all their numbers are left them by the
foe.
Few ; and their mightiest warriors lie cold in the
springing fern.
Short rede is in their council—no course but to return ;
But the spoils of war must be gathered, and the earth
piled over the slain ;
Never the kites of England shall batten on the Dane.
Still stands the heap in the valley—men call it
Guthrac's Mound—
Where the chieftain sleeps with his followers in silence
ranged around.

Then down the path with hearts of wrath they turn
toward the shore,
Nor stop till where the causeway shows the deep red
stains of gore,
And one by one those stains lead on till they come
to the oaken door.
Then the murder fiend was wakened, and far across
the strand
Echoed the thundering strokes that fell from axe and
club and brand,
Till the strong gate was broken, and through the
opening poured,
In the dread power of vengeance, the leaders of the
horde.
No warrior stood to meet them. A little girlish
hand
Upraised unarmed a moment stayed the fury of the
band.
“Oh, spare him, spare my father!” She clasps the
leader’s knee.
His hand is in her golden hair; his blade is flashing
free.
Stern fell the blow. The tide of life poured from her
smitten side,
And o’er her slaughtered sire she fell, and on his
breast she died.

XXX.

And then,—there came no warning, no sign of the
coming woe ;
The sun shone bright in the heavens, and the wind
was hushed and low,—
But the Spirit of God was moving, as of old, on the
face of the sea,
And nature waited in silence to know what the end
would be.
Then the great depths were troubled, and the waters
rose on an heap—
Rose at the Master's bidding as a giant aroused from
sleep ;
And o'er the plain of the ocean, with white plumes on
its crest,
Awful in pitiless strength the giant wave rolled on to
the west,
And night closed on the tower as with a sullen roar
That mighty bank of water rolled up the fated
shore.
It rolled over sand and boulder, it rolled up the
sloping glen,
And its crest of white round the south of the height
hid the ruined homes of men ;
And a feeble cry rose here and there from the surface
of the wave,
But that wave rolled on and the cry was gone, and
the living found a grave.

And never more on sea or shore the pirate host was
seen,

And never more their ships shall ride upon the ocean's
green ;

And wheresoever those waters went, o'er strand and
shining plain,

The veil they cast as on they passed shall ne'er be
drawn again.

But often o'er the silver sea at night will Hilda glide,
And sing again the blessèd songs she sang at the
eventide.

Still in the tower are living souls, so the old legends
say,

And captive there the murderers wait till the dread
judgment day ;

And high above the wild winds' cry, when the storm
is on the main,

Is heard the hopeless wail that rings from the Prison
of the Dane.

THE OLD MAN'S TALE.

YE know that I am old and weak, and that I soon
must die,

For ye hear the halting footstep, and mark the wearied
eye.

To you the day is warm and bright, the song-bird's
voice is clear,

The world is beauty to the sight and music to the ear.
I cannot joy in the balm of spring that comes from
o'er the lea ;

The very beating of my heart is burdensome to me.

I linger on the doorstep, yet scarcely feel the sun ;

I only know how long the course, the goal how nearly
won.

I have beaten the world in the race of time, and,
passing on before,

By God's own grace I'll find a place at His appointed
door.

The day hath been to me, as now it is to all of you,
When a blessing came with the early rain, a blessing
with the dew.

My heart was light, my eye was bright, my step was
free and strong,
And my soul took in the broad fair world and turned
it into song ;
The lark rose up before my feet ; the cliffs, the sky,
the sea
Had but one voice, the voice of joy, and ever sang
to me.
Far-stretched and fair my lands were spread, and rich
my yearly store,
And with a grateful hand I fed the hungry and the
poor.
Within my home a holy ray in soft effulgence shone,
The gentlest heart beneath the day was wedded to
my own ;
And years went on, and tiny feet around my hearth
were heard,
And gentle prattlings soft and sweet as music of a
bird ;
Between my knees, in infant grace, a little angel stood.
What wonder if my Maker's face to me was very
good ?

'Twas first a scarcely noticed word, and then a doubtful
tale,
A rumour told with bated breath, with trembling lips
and pale ;
And then the talk of ancient men in converse deep
and low,

And in the heart a heavy gloom, the harbinger of woe ;
And then a blight upon the land, like to that cloud
 of old,
That, spreading from a little hand, o'er all the heaven
 rolled ;
And then we knew that it must come. If it were
 given to man
The power to work on earth the wrath and fulness of
 his ban,
Oh, what a fearful doom had been on him whose
 serpent-sting
Struck down the life of peace between the people and
 the king !
We knew that it must come at last, so dark the times
 had grown,
So heavy on the nation's life the burden of the
 throne ;
So deep and rankling was the steel oppression's hand
 had driven,
So loud and sad the daily cry that rose from earth to
 heaven.
In vain we struggled with the Lord in vigil, fast, and
 prayer ;
The very sheath forsook the sword, and left it keen
 and bare.
We could not see them set at nought, and idly stand
 aside,—
The rights for which our fathers fought, for which our
 fathers died.

And with the charter sealed in blood, and by the
champions' graves,
Could we deny our title good, and own our children
slaves?

So the dark night of civil war reigned o'er the
trembling land ;
Her edicts were the cannon-bursts, her sceptre was
the brand.

O God, it was a fearful price, ay, even to be free,
That fratricidal sacrifice, that weight of misery !
Beneath the royal standard fought the chiefs whom
feudal pride

And long descent of lordly rule won to the tyrant's
side ;

And single-hearted loyalty, that only asked to own
A thankless master, and to die unnoticed and unknown.
And wily priests their meshes spread, and gathered as
their prey

Men who had learned to bow the head, to listen and
obey.

A gallant host. We fought and won. 'Twere need-
less now to tell

The shouts and garments rolled in blood before the
monarch fell.

Not unto us ; by Thee alone, O Lord, the right was
weighed,

By Thee alone the conquest won : to Thee be glory
paid.

As arrows hurtling from the bow, shot with a master's skill,

Our lot it was to deal the blow, but it was Thine to will.

I look across the long-drawn space of parted years.

Once more

I see my father's ancient hall ; I see an open door.

The faces I have loved are there—the mother and the child,—

With the sweet looks that warmed my heart as heaven when they smiled.

The loving eyes are filled with tears. The parting hour has come ;

I hear the sound of hoof and steel, the bugle and the drum.

And as the tendrils to the staff round which their curls are thrown,

I feel the little trembling hands that gather round my own ;

I feel the little trembling hands that bind me as a chain,
And the soft touch that as a prayer entreats me to remain.

The hour has come. Lip clings to lip. There is a smothered sigh,

A broken chord within the heart, a last, a sad good-bye.

The vision fades away, but thus in dreams I often see
Those faces full of tender love, that were so dear to me.

The tale of love that could not die—that love is
living now ;
I feel their lips upon my cheek, their breath upon my
brow ;
The brightest angels in the sky to me in mercy
given,
That on my darlings' gentle wings I may be borne to
heaven.

I thought that I had found a friend, one whom my
soul could hold
Warm as a sunbeam in the heart, and pure as tested
gold.
How oft together have we held sweet converse by the
way ;
Together stemmed the tide of fight, together knelt to
pray.
He was the casket of my thoughts ; my hopes and
fears he knew ;
His life was prized above my own, for I believed him
true,
And stronger than a brother's claim the wondrous
links that bind
Two chosen hearts together in the brotherhood of
kind.
When sorely wounded he was laid I was his help and
shield,
What time fierce Rupert's charge was made on
Marston's bloody field.

The blows fell fast. I held my own till Cromwell
turned the day,
And then we staunched his bleeding wounds and bore
him from the fray.
We laid him on the heathery bed ; it seemed the bed
of death,
So deep and sore his wounds had bled, so weary was
the breath ;
And many a long and anxious watch my sleepless
eyes have kept,
Until the fevered brow was cool, the burdened spirit
slept.
For slowly came the wave of life back from that tide-
less sea
Where sleep the woes of human strife in vast
eternity.
He lived. The glow of wonted strength by daily steps
returned,
And I—my heart received at length the guerdon it
had earned.

"Twas night, and not a star was seen. So dense and
broad the cloud,
Of some vast city of the dead it might have been the
shroud.
The distant fires of the camp shone lurid through the
haze,
And strangely marked the slumbering forms around
the changing blaze.

I could not rest, I could not sleep, for thoughts and
hopes and fears,
And readings from the roll of love that filled my
bygone years,
So crowded through the fevered brain in wild and
mystic race,
That sleep, though welcome, tried in vain to find a
resting-place.
Scarce knowing where, with ample cloak across my
shoulders cast,
O'er the soft turf of early spring all silently I
passed.
There was no sound upon the plain, no sound upon
the hill,
And, save the tumult in my brain, 'twas very dark and
still.
My wandering footsteps paused at length beneath an
ancient tree,
And there I struggled with my thoughts, and bade the
soul be free.

There came two voices speaking low close to my
resting-place,
Low, but so near that every sound my startled sense
could trace.
Full well I knew the one. (It was so dark that none
could see
The silent covered form that lay beneath the branch-
ing tree.)

Silent, I held my breath with pain, for every little word

That told the treason of a friend went through me like a sword.

Slowly they came ; they paused a while ; then slowly wended on,

Leaving the echo of their speech e'en when themselves were gone.

Such words !—and I had heard them all. Till then I ne'er had thought,

Foul as it was, how very foul the sin that Judas wrought.

It seemed as though the air was full of perjury and crime,

And Heaven was hidden from the world, and devils ruled the time.

I followed where the voices led as hunter stalks the deer,

The falling step no sound betrayed to wake the victim's ear.

With weapon bared I followed close. At last so near I stood

I marvelled that they had not heard the pulses of my blood ;

Then, as they paused upon the heath, through all my heart there went

A feeling that to give it words the very sky had rent,

And on the tempter's head was hurled the fury of my
sword,
And at my feet in blood he fell, and died before the
Lord.

Round Thornton turned. His sword was drawn ere
yet a moment sped,
Ere yet my own, all dank with gore, had risen from
its dead.
Perchance he might have struck me down, but ere his
weapon fell
I spake and cursed him in that name that I had loved
so well.
He stood as one that doubts his ear hath told its tale
aright,
Then quickly turned without a word and vanished in
the night.

The plot was spoilt, the victory won. From east to
western coast
Were heard the chants, were seen the arms and banners
of the host—
The host before whose battle brow had horse and foot
gone down,
And every power and link that bound the kingdom to
the crown.

The fleetest steed is slow of foot, and hard the
smoothest way
When love impatient aims the goal, still chafing at delay,

And thought speeds on its course before, and checked
returns again
To urge the rowels' deeper goad, and shake the
slackened rein.
The road was long. For many a mile each moment
as it passed
Was numbered in a heart that wished that moment
was the last,
That wished that moment was the last of all the
tedious hours
That stood before the blessed love within my homely
towers.
At length, at length, another day, another setting
sun,
My own would be my own again, and all my toil be
done !

But then there came a nameless dread, an awful sense
of fear,
Like his who in the visioned night felt God Himself
was near.
There was no sound, there was no sight ; and yet
within my brain
I seemed to see a stream of blood, to hear a shriek of
pain ;
And then, it was no mortal sleep that o'er my senses
stole,
It was no mortal dream that stamped its impress on
my soul,

But like the seer's inspired trance, that, passing time
and space,
Commands the days unborn to live, and meets them
face to face.

The long-drawn sweep, the terraced walk, the ivy-
painted hall,
The shadows and the lights that traced each casement,
door, and wall,
The kennel and the sleeping hound, the copse and
silent stream,
That in its flowing scarcely seemed to break the silver
beam ;
The grand old forest far away, the hill, the drooping vale,
All pictured in the light that shone so bright and yet
so pale ;
The broad white orb, the distant gems that glittered
in the sky,
The clear dark hue all infinite that mocked the search-
ing eye ;
The snowy flakes of peaceful cloud, pure as a soul
forgiven,
Like down that from an angel's wing still lingers in
the heaven ;—
I saw them all, as still as though a spirit had imprest
On all the everlasting seal of deep and holy rest.
There was a hand upon my heart ; I could not speak
or move,
But sat in silent prayer before the temple of my love.

My very charger felt the spell, and stayed his panting
breath,
Like an image carved at midnight by the pulseless
hand of death.

Then came a change. The moon was hid, the sky
grew black with cloud,
And 'midst the bending of the trees the tempest
screamed aloud ;
Then through the loopholes in the wall my eye caught
here and there
A little light that rose and sank, and then a lurid
glare.
It grew. By Heaven ! 'twas all aglow : a flame and
bursts of smoke,
Like the dashing spray when a giant rock hath
trembled at the stroke.
Tossed aloft and hurled abroad by the winds in their
headlong might;
Gloom and blaze and blaze and gloom breaking the
sceptre of night,
Spreading its poison o'er lintel and beam, bursting
each window and door,
Gathering strength from destruction and death, and
mocking the wind in its roar ;
And that fell hand was on my heart, and I sat as
locked in steel,
As one that had not life to move, and yet had the life
to feel.

There were voices that screamed, and struggling forms ;
and few, and but here and there,
Would strong men battle a path to life, blackened and
scorched, and bare,—

Few and faint, for e'en to the strong the fight was
hardly won.

Oh, woe for the old, and the weak, and the young, for
rescue there was none ;

And the flames still rose, and I strove in vain to turn
away my eye.

O God, or ease my maddened brain, or give me
strength to die !

Higher and stronger grew the flames, and I knew that
the doom was cast ;

No breath of life could hold its own within that fiery blast.

But even then—oh ! passing sweet—like a whisper
they seemed so near,

I heard the voices that I loved, soft and gentle and clear ;

Yet I knew in the depth of my inmost heart that those
sweet accents came—

Near as they seemed—from the chamber of death,
from the midst of the belt of flame.

They uttered the words I had loved to hear on many
an earlier day,

When the mother trained the childish lips, and taught
them how to pray

Those blessed words that angels bear rejoicing to the
throne,

The burden of the infant's prayer that Jesus makes
His own—

The words that I so oft had heard lisped at the
mother's knee ;
And now, as then, although in death, I heard them
pray for me.
And then the flames shot up to the clouds, and the
smoke rolled far and wide,
And as the roof fell crashing in I knew that they had died.

A grasp was laid upon my arm. 'Twas Thornton's
voice that spake
In low and hissing accents like a serpent in the brake :
"Fool to instruct the hand that time or chance may
make a foe,
How best to reach the life, and where to strike the
surest blow.
I wot the quittance of revenge is written fair and plain ;
Rase if thou canst the seal of blood." He spake, and
turned the rein,
And down the road and o'er the moor I heard his
courser's tread ;
Then a great void came upon my soul, as I were with
the dead.

I woke, and lo ! it was a dream, a vision of unrest,
The working of a wearied soul with hope and fear
opprest.
The blessed sun was in the sky, the morn was bright
and fair,
And the sweet notes of the song-birds were ringing in
the air.

It was a dream. The night was gone, yet like a veil
unrolled

There stood between the day and me all that the night
had told—

A leprous spot on memory's life no stream could wash
away,

A record on the page of time plain as the light of day.

On, on! no mortal man could bear to rest with such
a load

Of sinking hopes and rising fears. We sped along
the road.

On, on! no stop beside the stream, no loiter in the
shade ;

My thoughts but led the path before, and well my
steed obeyed.

Past moor and hamlet, town and dell, swift as the
winter's wind,

The very echoes of our tread, we left them far
behind,

Till sudden, on the latest steep, the foam-flecked rein
I drew.

Below me was a blackened pile ; my dream was only
true.

How time went on, and life came back, it lists not
here to tell ;

Or how I gathered proofs of all I knew before so
well—

Proofs, damning proofs, that bore the guilt red to the
murderer's hand,
Or how I traced him to the port from whence he fled
the land.
I followed as a sleuth-hound tracks his flying victim's
tread ;
No spot through which his feet had passed but there
my vengeance sped.
O'er mighty seas and long-drawn wastes and woods
I held the chase,
In many climes, through many tribes of stern and
savage race.
Unchanged, 'midst changing times, my hate as when
I first began ;
The whole world was my hunting-field, my prey a
fellow-man.

Ye know not, ye whose daily life is filled with daily
cares,
Who in your labour entertain an angel unawares,
How foul a thing the soul will grow that through long
years of time
Lives but to do one single act, and that one act a crime.
I thought not in my happier days thus to exist for hate
My life a gleam of distant blood, my labour but to wait.
Eye for an eye, revenge for wrong, was all my heart
could know ;
And God was nought unless He wrought damnation
on my foe.

Say I was mad. 'Tis no less true. I lived as others
live,

Who in the depths of sin have lost the power to forgive.

There's mercy for a living man, refuse it as he will ;
The love that suffers him to live through life pursues
him still ;

E'en on the hardest heart there falls the dew of saving
grace,

And falls and falls perchance at last to find a resting-
place.

I know not how it came, but for a moment now and then
I felt as power were given to love and bless my fellow-
men.

A moment, and it passed away, and deeper was the
night,

The blackness of my erring soul, for that one ray of light.

It was but, at first, like a little gleam that shineth from
afar,

As the fitful glow in the dead of night of a very distant
star ;

But it came, and again, as the tide from the ebb turns
and returns to the shore ;

I was a man, a broken man, but still a man once more.

The bow that hath too long been bent, unstrung its
bend retains ;

The ransomed captive long can show the fester of his
chains.

I could not feel as others felt, nor join the mingling throng,
The busy world, the daily talk, the laughter and the song ;
Far, far away from man's abode, toward the trackless west,
I thought to learn the secret road that guides the soul to rest.

'Twas winter, and the world was bare, and thick and fast the snow,
And without the wind was howling as the trees went to and fro.
Within, the pine logs glowed ; my dog was sleeping at my side ;
The Book was open at the tale of how the Saviour died.
I read as one that readeth on, to whom the words are nought,
As one whose ears receive the sound, but cannot feel the thought ;
Yet there I sat still reading, and reading o'er again,
Striving as man to feel for God, but striving still in vain.
All cold and dead at heart, I closed the volume in despair,
Nor was there strength within the soul to seek relief in prayer.

The slumbering dog had heard a sound, and started
from his rest,
With bending neck and eager eyes, white fangs, and
angry crest.
So deep the growl 'twas scarcely heard above the
tempest's roar,
As slowly from the hearth he strode up to the guarded
door.
I seized a gun, and stood prepared. The voice of
human kind,
So weak no wonder it was lost in the howling of the wind,
A pleading voice in English tongue. I cast the gun
aside,
And strongly in a far recess the struggling mastiff tied.
The bolts were drawn, the door flung wide ; a traveller
worn with cold,
A single, weary, ghost-like man, a grizzled man, and old,
With failing step ; he scarce had strength to answer to
my call,
And raised a trembling hand to rest against the cottage
wall.
He entered, and I closed the door, and led his faltering
feet,
Half bearing him, he was so weak, and placed him on
a seat,
Piled up fresh wood upon the hearth, and brought him
drink and food,
And chafed his weary limbs, and strove to warm the
frozen blood.

And then I gazed upon him, on his thin grey locks of
hair ;
The poor, worn face, that told of years, of long, long
years of care ;
His starting bones and sunken eyes. And like a dart
of flame,
Flashed forth a well-remembered face, and lo ! it was
the same.
The tempter to my very hearth had brought my long-
sought foe,
Had given his life into my hand, and bid me deal the
blow.

My blood was mad as the days rose up, those evil
days of yore ;
A murderous hand was at his throat, and dashed him
to the floor ;
Shrieking, I hurled him from his seat. He knew me
as he fell ;
One little glance—a moment's glance—and nought
remained to tell.
And a short low cry burst from him, a bitter, painful
cry,
The cry as of a hunted beast that feels that it must
die.
A pause. No human hand it was that stayed the lifted
knife,
It was no voice of living flesh that pleaded for his
life ;

But I heard the rush of angel wings swift darting
through the air,
I heard again those voices that last were heard in prayer,
And a great light burst upon my soul as through an
open door,
And I felt that heaven was nearer then than e'er it
was before.
Slowly I spoke : "Thy crime was great, and I have
waited long,
And every day hath deeper stamped the memory of
wrong.
In all my ways, in all my thoughts, in visions of the
night,
This hour reddened with thy blood hath been before
my sight ;
These twenty years for this alone my soul hath cared
to live,
And now that vengeance is my own, I feel I must
forgive,
And for His love by whose sweet grace my soul from
sin is shriven,
I say to thee ' Depart in peace, uninjured and for-
given.' "

Forgiven? Ah ! how vain the thought ; the word
how strange and wild,
And he, the murderer of my wife, the murderer of my
child !
I stood aside. He slowly rose, pale as the dead white
snow ;

One choking sob he gave, and then, with faltering
steps and slow,
Without a word, as one from whom all living hopes
are driven,
Passed outward to that dreadful gloom that barred the
face of heaven.

I closed the door. His withered form was hidden
from my gaze.
The fire within burned warm and bright. I sat before
the blaze,
And strove to think that I had done, obedient to the
Word,
The whole commandment, and had won the blessing
of the Lord.
Had I not spared my direst foe when he was in my
hand?
Had I not checked the lifted blow and cast away the
brand?
Had I not stilled the raging blood, wild as an angry
sea?
Wherefore, my God, for all my good in love remember
me.

The fire within was warm and clear. I sat before the
light.
Without were moanings wild and drear, the moanings
of the night ;

The snow was falling thick and fast. No other refuge
nigh,

The homeless in that fearful blast had but one home
—to die.

And words seemed borne in every gust, in every fitful
sound—

“What hast thou done? Thy brother’s blood is
calling from the ground.”

Brother! Could such a wretch as he for one brief
moment claim

From man, and least of all from me, so near, so dear
a name?

But then a writing on the wall stood plain and dread
to see :

“In that thou didst it not for him, thou didst it not
for Me.”

I could not rest. But few short yards those faltering
steps had sped ;

I found him all so cold and stiff it seemed as he were
dead.

I bore him home, and many an hour with ever watch-
ful care,

As mother tends her little one, I sat and nursed him
there ;

And reason came again, and life, but all too weak to
stay,

And from between these arms at last his spirit passed
away.

He died, and blessed me as he died. Ay, there are
few who know
The mercy that is stored for him who can forgive
a foe ;
But few can tell how deep and pure the peace that
Heaven can send,
For who gives vengeance up to God makes God Him-
self a friend.

PHILIP LEE.

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A BITTER and a stormy night ; the wind was keen and
strong,
And the white foam flew as the wild gusts blew, and
bore the waves along.
Athwart the sky, athwart the moon, the scud was flying
free,
And the foam that dashed through the firmament was
like the foam of the sea.
My heart was at one with the changing light and the
shadows hurrying past,
With the sound of the waves as they rose and fell,
with the wind in its lull and blast ;
For the blood of life was full and strong, and the
world was all before,
And 'twas better to stand on the beaten strand than
to sit within the door ;
And I cared not whither my steps were bent, so I was
alone on the shore.

For the plunge of the tide, and the song of the gale,
and the phantoms of the mind,
Little I recked as I moved along how the waves rolled
up behind.

Foot by foot they followed me close, as a lion that
stalks his prey ;

One by one the marks I had left in the sand were
washed away ;

Until I found I was compassed round with the cliffs
and the boiling tide,

The heights behind and the waves before, and death
on every side.

Stern and grand, and on either hand rounding out to
the sea,

The broad cliffs raised their heads so high they could
not care for me.

With a spring and a roar the waves rushed in, as a
tiger that stretches his chain,

And for every check came thundering on with a
spring and a roar again.

No kindly ledge, no winding path, nought but the
pale blank wall ;

No sound but the whirl of the mocking winds and the
waves in their rise and fall—

The pitiless waves ; and there was none but God on
whom to call.

To wait and watch the shadow of death as it cometh
on and on,

With none to bless the parting breath or weep when
the spirit is gone ;
To die like a dog without a word save only the broken
prayer
That cometh not from the heart of faith, but the
gasping of despair ;
With the cold sea-spray, like a serpent's slime, wreath-
ing o'er body and limb,
Till the heart is faint and the brain swims round, and
the sight is bleared and dim ;
With never a hope that God will hear, or, hearing,
heed the cry ;
To be beaten down with the doom of hell even before
I die ;—
I had not thought so deep a curse had been beneath
the sky.

Weary, weary in heart and brain, drenched, and
stiffened, and numb,
On a broken rock beneath the cliff I waited till death
should come,
Closed in between the rock and the cliff, or I had
been swept to the sea ;
For the broad stone quivered at every stroke, and
the waves came over my knee.
Soft and low, dreamy and slow, as the toll of a distant
bell,
To and fro the pulses go like the sea in its summer
swell,—

So gentle and slow the ebb and flow I might have
 been counted as dead,
 So weak and loose the chain of life, it seemed that the
 spirit had fled.

A shout and a cry from the cliffs on high, twice, and
 thrice, and again,—
 A shout and a hail above the gale, above the roar of
 the main.
 'Twas heard, but I answered not, nor moved from the
 spot whereon I lay,
 For it seemed to me, in my lethargy, as if life had
 wearied away ;
 It seemed to me, in my lethargy, that I lay beneath the
 wave,
 And 'twas only the cry of a dying wretch as he joined
 me in the grave ;
 And it was but at first like a little spot of rain on
 a summer day,
 Scarce noticed, or perchance forgot ere it hath passed
 away.
 But breathed anew it gathered strength, and would
 not be denied,
 And I heard again the whirl of the wind, and the roar
 and the dash of the tide.
 It was a bitter agony to feel that I had not died.

A moment, and again the shout down from the hill-top
 came,

And I heard and knew my father's voice as he called
me by my name ;
And straight above me, bending o'er the margin of the
height,
Were faces of men, like stars of God, all in the clear
moonlight :
And the love of life came over my heart as a spring in
a thirsty land,
And I strove to answer them back again, and feebly
raised my hand.
" He lives ! " And I heard the shout of joy ; but
mingled with the rest
Was a cry like the sob of a weary child as it sinks on
its mother's breast ;
A cry that burst from a heart o'erstrained with the
burden of its care,
And hurried from the quivering lips in mingled praise
and prayer.

" Mine is the task," said Philip Lee ; " for though your
heart is bold,
The cliff is high, and the wind is strong, and you are
weak and old ;
My eye is clear, my arms are young, my life is bound
to none,
And for the holy love of God I go to help your
son."
They brought the rope ; with careful heed he bound
it round his breast ;

And with a blessing and a prayer they launched him
o'er the crest.

It was fending of foot and arm and hand as he swung
there to and fro

In the whirl of the wind, with the rocks and the sea
a hundred feet below.

"Steadily! Steadily! Lower again!" And longer
grew the line,

Till he stood beside me under the cliff, and placed
a hand on mine.

Higher and higher, the run of the tide came almost
over the stone,

As he loosed the rope from off his waist and passed it
round my own,

And fixed a slender cord to guide. Then, as a mother
bends

To raise and bless the helpless babe that lovingly she
tends,

He stooped and raised me tenderly, and for a moment
stood,

And in his strength he held me up above the dashing
flood.

"Ready?"—above. "Ready!"—below. "The time
is short," said he,

"But even as I have kept faith with thine will God
keep faith with me."

Then I was raised in the midnight air, and he was left
in the sea.

My weakened sense went round and round ; I felt
and knew no more,
But still I seemed as one that hath dreamed of death
on a beaten shore ;
Till on the height in the moonbeams bright I opened
my eyes at last,
And knew that life had come again, and the dream
was in the past.
And I heard afar the song of the sea—it seemed but
a song to me then,
For the strong earth bore me up, and around were the
kindly tones of men.

Strong in hand and strong in heart, still holding to the
guide,
Philip had stood at the foot of the cliff in the tangle
and coil of the tide.
He guided me safe, though headlong waves behind
and round him broke,
And 'twas grapple of hand and grip of foot at each
repeated stroke.
In the bursting swell it was hard to tell the sea from
the mist of spray,
And the hungry waves, like living things, fought with
a living prey.
Yet still he held his purpose sure till o'er the dizzy
height
Kind hands stretched forth to take me in, and bore
me from his sight.

“Unloose the cords.” The time is short; the battle
is for life,

And none may abide in the rage of the tide, nor weary
of the strife.

The knots are loosed; the cord is swung, and caught
as it descends.

One struggle more and the fight is o’er, the victor with
his friends;

One struggle more and the fight is o’er. The rope is
firmly bound.

“Ready?” But from below there came no answer to
the sound,

But they heard a roar and a sullen plunge, and the
spray dashed wild and free,

And they saw the broad white sheet of foam that lay
on the angry sea,

And the light on the stone as the wave rolled back;
but where was Philip Lee?

The wave rolled back, but the knots held true. With
drooped and bleeding head,

With mangled limbs all crushed and torn, and helpless
as the dead,

A form was rescued from the wave. The very wind
was still

As they raised him out of the boiling surf up to the
crest of the hill.

Time passed away, but evermore Lee was a crippled
man,

Weary and weak, as one whose years are broken in
their span.

Loving and loved of all he lived, loving and loved he
died,

The noblest, bravest, gentlest heart in all the country
side.

Then ask not why, when I shall die, I'll rest by Philip
Lee,

For well I ween that he hath been a neighbour unto
me.

SHORT PIECES.



HOPE.

Joys of the future, we hail your advancing
Sunbeams of bliss in the mine of despair ;
Lights of the earth in the firmament dancing,
Pillows of rest for the sickness of care.

What though the blast of the present be o'er us,
Dark though the surges through which we have past ;
To-morrow's a haven of beauty before us,
Filled with the joys that shall bless us at last.

When man from the Garden of Eden was driven,
And Memory embittered his way with her tears,
It was Hope that directed his footsteps to heaven,
And lit the heart fire that melted his fears.

Dead is the past, and the present is dying,
Hope stretches its sceptre of life to the soul,
And all the dark shadows that round us are flying
Are lost in the light that encircles the goal.

MARCH, 1862.

CAME a little sunbeam
Floating on the morn,
Pure as words of heaven
By an angel borne.

And we blessed the Giver
For the gift He sent,
For the blessèd gift that came
From the firmament.

It was half in heaven,
Only half on earth ;
And we knew it clinging
To its place of birth.

Yet our spirits trusted
That its loving ray
Still would smile upon us,
Even through the day ;

Hoped that it would warm us
Even in the grave ;
So we blessed the Giver
For the gift He gave.

Came a cloud of sorrow
Rolling up the sky,
Came a mighty shadow,
Came a wailing cry ;

And with eyes of weeping,
Hearts bowed down with pain,
Looked we for the sunbeam ;
But we looked in vain.

Still the cloud is o'er us,
Still the gale is there ;
But it speaks no longer
Accents of despair.

For we know the sunbeam
Still is in the sky,
Though with beauty hidden
From the mortal eye ;

Still it beams in Heaven
But with brighter wave ;
Still we bless the Giver
For the gift He gave.

CANA OF GALILEE.

IT was but water from the well,
 But they filled the pots to the brim.
The duty that the Master taught
They questioned not, but simply wrought,
 Obedient unto Him.

Put thou no value on the gift,
 Give freely that is thine ;
Unto the Master leave the rest :
Thine is but water at the best—
 God turns it into wine.

THE LAND OF GOD'S DELIGHT.

I HEAR the angels whisper in the silent midnight air—
They tell me of another land where all is bright and
fair,
A land of rest from struggle, of triumph after fight,
A land of joy and rapture, the land of God's delight.

Oh, lovely is the springtime, when the corn is young
and green,
And the holy sunshine clothes the earth in robes of
glowing sheen;
And glorious is the mighty sea, when winds and
tempest cease,
And her broad bosom seems to be the home of God's
own peace.

But lovelier far than any scene upon this world of
ours
Is the sea before the emerald throne and the sheen in
the heavenly bowers,

And sweeter far than any note upraised by mortal
tongue

Is the glorious song of praises by ransomed voices
sung.

Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor human
lips can tell,

The blessings God hath treasured up for those who
love Him well ;

The bliss of those whom Christ Himself hath clothed
in robes of white,

Whose rest is found for ever in the land of God's
delight.

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Yes ; the land of little people is a lovelier land than
ours,
With its mines of new-found treasures, mossy glades,
and fairy bowers ;
Earth her robe of choicest beauty spreads to woo the
tender feet,
And the angels whispering round them thrill the air
with accents sweet.
Memory brings no pang of sorrow, troubles lightly
pass away ;
Hope's horizon is to-morrow, and the sun is bright
to-day ;
Every moment has its blessing, sweeter thoughts, and
fairer flowers.
Yes ; the land of little people is a lovelier land than
ours.

But from o'er the silent river comes to us a purer
glow—
Purer even than the sunbeams that the little people
know;
And the love-song of the heavens steals upon the
wearied ear,
Sweeter than the angels' whispers that the little people
hear;
And the wanderer overstriven, humbled as a little
child,
Knows the past is all forgiven, and his God is
reconciled,
When around his faltering footsteps comes the blessing
of the dove,
From the fairest world of any, from the home of
peace and love.

Brighter are the rays of morning that the dread of
night is lost,
Dearer far the sheltering haven that the barque was
tempest tossed;
And the simple child can never learn the beauty of
that shore
Where the gloom of sin hath rested, where it resteth
nevermore.
Weary feet may rest unsummoned, hopes downstricken
rise again,
And the rainbow's glories sparkle on the far-off clouds
of pain;

There are beauties aye unfading, gifts that Time can
ne'er recall,
For the country of the blessed is the loveliest land
of all.

THE END.

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	PAGE		PAGE
GENERAL LITERATURE.	2	MILITARY WORKS.	33
PARCHMENT LIBRARY	18	POETRY	35
PULPIT COMMENTARY	21	NOVELS AND TALES	41
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SERIES	30	BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG	43

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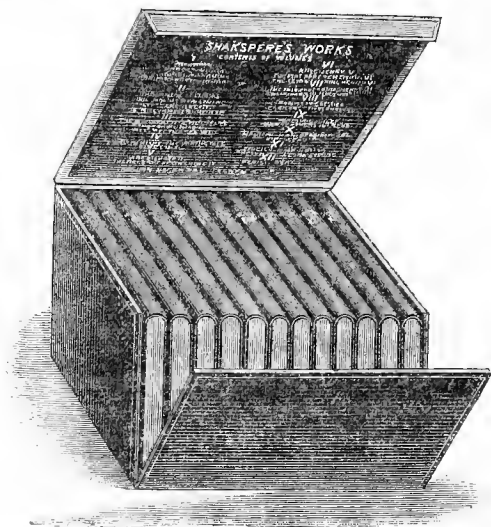
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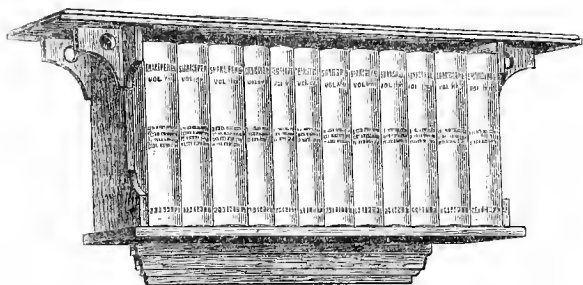
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SPECIMEN OF TYPE.

4

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ACT I

Salar. My wind, cooling my broth,
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run
But I should think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy Andrew, dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
And, in a word, but even now worth this,
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought
That such a thing bechanc'd would make me sad?
But tell not me: I know Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

Ant. Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

Salar. Why, then you are in love.

Ant. Fie, fie!

Salar. Not in love neither? Then let us say you
are sad,

Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh, and leap, and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed
Janus,

Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time:
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper;
And other of such vinegar aspect

